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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

BUSINESS CURRICULUM AS CONTEXT: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN

by

Patricia Claire Leske

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1991

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Each person (old or young) needs to be treated as a unique, one-of-a-kind individual, with a particular DNA, with experiences unique to him or her alone. Each is a living library to be cherished and respected.

Gerald Larue, 1989
Humanist of the Year.

It is well for us at times to be idealists. Not to be scoffers and doubters; not to be cynical, but to believe that all the people of the world, regardless of colour, regardless of the country in which they live, are fine people, and if we treat them as though they are, they will treat us in the same spirit. It is well for us sometimes to go to the hilltops, and when we do as individuals and in great moments as nations, we see a fairer world. The fairer world is no dream; it can be made a reality if each of us takes the matter seriously and works toward that end.

Agnes Macphail
First Female Member of Parliament.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled **BUSINESS CURRICULUM AS CONTEXT: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN** submitted by Patricia Claire Leske in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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Date October 4, 1991

ABSTRACT

What are some mid-age women's needs and expectations as they re-enter the world of "student"? Why do we re-enter the classroom?

Knowledge seeking as a process of living a life into deeper layers of meaning rather than searching for meaning is recorded. This study discloses a woman's lifeworld as student with the ripple effects on family and friends that impact back upon a self in change and motion. The classroom dynamic is one micro-organism or link in the human world-chain of events.

This is a qualitative study. Six women in a career division program of an adult career upgrading college were twice formally interviewed. I, as woman-instructor/woman-graduate student, co-participated in the research findings of a woman's world as student. My 16 years of classroom experience within this adult world of women assisted in grounding the study. Informal observational data collecting, comparison and synthesizing was ongoing during the research and writing, as I remain actively involved in classroom action and participation. The Progoff journal writing technique proved an invaluable research tool.

This study glimpsed women returning to the classroom, taking back the responsibility for their lives. The co-participation of instructor and student in researching our personal lifeworlds sheds light on how meaningful women's personal stories are. The curriculum becomes contextualized.

What is the curriculum as perceived by women as students within this business careers department? In writing curriculum for a technological business world, whose interests are being served? The students interviewed clearly

showed that technological skills for job security were only part of the curriculum for them. There is also the affective component.

Women as change-makers are re-socializing towards self-care; rediscovering an identity. In rediscovering their voices, towards degendering the gender role, women seek women as growth agents. Women seek women's dynamism, attitudes, insights, enthusiasms, shared experiences and reflections towards self-growth.

The classroom experience acts as a catalyst. The curriculum begins where the student is. Women must not be educated merely as a marketable resource, but as equal contributors to society. The classroom is ultimately global.

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My husband and children, as we journey together, for your challenges, input, and understanding of a lifeworld evolving.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Another Day . . .

> Married women who work for pay have not relinquished their domestic responsibilities. Instead they have taken on a double day of work, labouring as both wage workers and domestic workers . . . The central task--the production of life itself--is an ongoing, endlessly recurring process. Its production time can never be reduced. (Luxton, 1980, pp. 11, 21)

It is a Monday morning of another week, 7:30 a.m. to be precise. Up since 5:30 a.m., organizing the family and me, I am now gradually focusing my thoughts out of the role of wife and mother towards that of instructor as I drive the highway. The weekend is still moving with me as I park in my allotted stall. Have I completed the marking, what is the focus of today's classes? How much still must be covered before the test? I smile to myself. Who am I presently? Housewife, wife, mother, instructor, student, or . . . ?

The College

My professional daily world is within an adult education environment in the downtown core of a large metropolitan city. Three campuses accommodate more than 7 000 fulltime students, providing educational opportunities for adults returning to learning. I walk into the eight-storey building where I have instructed for 16 years. Within this building, adults are upgrading academic, literacy, and some basic employment skills. Here, also, new Canadians formally acquire a working knowledge of the English language.

A Child Development Unit, licensed to care for 52 preschool children between the ages of 3-5 years is available for College students' children. Here, competent and caring professional staff encourage learning through both formal and informal activities. This child care is available during regular class hours. Extended hours accommodate students on work experience. These children greet each day with enthusiasm and anticipation.

Each student throughout the College is assigned a counsellor, and an employment services unit focuses on employment procedures and possibilities--through job postings, guest speaker presentations, or individual student counselling related to employment issues. Modularized units on community resources are also available.

Textbooks for most programs are provided on a loan basis. Student success is the focus throughout the College. Situations necessitating a temporary program withdrawal are generally accommodated.

The Business Careers Department

The Student Body

I walk the stairs to the Business Careers Department on the fourth floor, anticipating another productive, time-pressured, student-oriented week. The programs of study are designed to prepare students for employment in secretarial/word processing, accounting, or clerical assistant fields.

Where have the 16 years gone? I reach the staff office door and search for keys. Already some students are opening lockers. "Good morning, Tricia. Did you have a good weekend?" "Yes, how about you?" "Busy, too busy, all

this homework. You should see my house." "Oh well, it isn't forever; what is more important at this stage?" "Exactly!" Laughter. "Still searching for your key, Tricia? That's how I'll remember you." A pixie grin follows. It is contagious. Further along the corridor a woman-student-mother is organizing herself with young child in tow. "Good morning. Off to daycare, ready for another fun day?" "Oh yes, he loves it. But today we're having a treat first." "Oh, yes?" "Yes, we're going for breakfast." And the small person smiles shyly. The beginnings of a normal day, a normal week.

I notice a locker decorated with balloons. I poke my head in the already busy computer classroom. Students are engrossed. One terminal has balloons attached. "Whose birthday?" Heads raise. A name is given. "Would you sign a balloon, Tricia?" "Of course!" I scribble a fun message, invite them to have a good day and leave for a cup of coffee and my desk in the staff office area.

My desk is organized chaos. I pull my calendar towards me and begin the jottings of another day, another week. This is also the week for the theatre. Some students are going to live theatre for the first time. I smile. The day I returned from my vacation several students asked whether there was one more opportunity for the theatre before graduating. I see 50 students have signed, some from the new intake classes, some the almost-graduates. Wonderful! This creative experience is an important part of the curriculum, I feel. We will have a wider personal and collective experiential reference base. We will share the experience with students unable or unwilling to attend for one reason or another.

Some students are shortly to graduate, the new intake is now some weeks into the program. Thirty students, the class maximum number, had enrolled. There were some waiting, hoping to enter our program. I notice a few have dropped the program--is it personal reasons? I reflect. The student body has altered during these 16 years. Although still primarily a female student body, the computer age has brought some male students into the accounting program, occasionally into the secretarial/word processing program or the clerical assistant short course. Nationalities? There are many. This is actually a global community. As well as Canadians--aboriginal and several-generation former immigrants--there are students born in the British Isles, Europe, various African locations, the Bahamas, Jamaica, the Orient, Japan, the Middle East.

Courses within this department are 39 weeks in length in the secretarial/word processing and accounting programs, and 20 weeks in length in the clerical assistant program. During these 39 weeks together, experiences will be shared. If true to the norm, married women will be re-identifying, refocusing their priorities and status of self via the adult career classroom. Some women will bring experiences of living, surviving and escaping a war-torn zone. Some women will share their frustrations as welfare recipients; some, the frustrations of temporary unemployment; some, the frustrations of single-parenting and poverty. There will be some sick children and some fragile relationships.

Former students greet me on the University campus. This College's Business Careers Department was the starting point. I have met former

Business Careers students in the Education, Arts, Fine Arts, Nursing, Business & Commerce, and Law faculties. "Without the College Business Careers Department, I would never have thought of this possibility. I worked for a while as a secretary, it wasn't enough. So here I am."

The Program

During these 16 years, I have seen program changes. In fact, changes are constant, moving from a core curriculum to components incorporating the requirements of the modern office, or the office becoming. Over the time span of these 16 years, there has been an equipment update in the keyboarding area from manual to electric typewriters; from stand-alone word processors to electronic typewriters. These classrooms of electronic typewriters will likely be replaced by computers. There is presently one computer classroom. The equipment update is dependent on the purchase funding allocated.

Representatives of the business and professional community sit on two advisory committees, giving input into the program. A former student recommended, and was chairperson of, the initial committee. We now have two advisory committees--one emphasizing the accounting program requirements, the other, the secretarial/word processing. Members of these advisory committees also frequently support our student placements within the workday environment during the final work experience component, where the curriculum content is assessed within the practical, world-of-work reality. Thus new office techniques are incorporated and skill components no longer required are eliminated.

During the 39 weeks, former students will form a panel to present the world-after-student life to our current student body. Some are now supervisors, office managers, or administrative assistants.

The Business Careers programs of study are designed to have the student employable upon graduation. The Department has a good record. The staff are proud of the program and of the students.

When visiting worksites during work experience placement during the final phase of the program, I frequently hear: "Do you remember me?" I remember the face, but not the name. The name is given. Former students share their lives after the classroom, their working world lives, a little of their personal perhaps. Obviously, the Business Careers program of study was very important to these women--wherever they chose to take it. Returning to the department at the end of work experience visitations, I share some of the conversational experiences with the staff.

The Instructional Staff

A requirement of the staff is that in addition to a teaching certificate, and a degree, there must be some office experience. Some staff members began their work life within the office environment, then moved into the instructional area, gaining a degree en route. Some career-tracked out of the office environment into the university academic setting before instructing. Some began worklife as professional high school instructors, worked within the office environment for a short time, then resumed as classroom instructors within an adult community. I am one of the latter.

Me

I instructed in a high school before marrying and moving to another country. Five years--and two children--later, returning to our homeland, I resume high school teaching to assist a husband in his career--Ph.D. studies in the United States. My cheques pay the family travel costs. A husband's Ph.D. complete, a wife's part-time job relinquished, we move to Canada. As I say to students sometimes as we ride the elevator: "Who would have anticipated being here, in Edmonton, Alberta, when we were in elementary school in Africa, Europe, etc?" We laugh, and converse if there is time before the elevator door opens.

What have I done, personally, during these 16 years? Like many women, during the first years I concentrated on a young family, on my husband's career. Then, when I felt it could be my turn to start, I returned to the university to begin the two-year requirement towards a Bachelor of Education degree, essential for permanent teaching certification.

I had been told by the Department of Education that one semester would be sufficient. The university decreed otherwise. I found an outstanding lecturer. No, I can't prove my mettle, then begin a graduate program; no, I can't pay for course not completed; yes, I must fulfil two years in the undergraduate program. But my lecturer-advisor encourages moving around the campus, in some cases, into graduate level courses.

After graduation, for two years, to further stimulate my intellect, enriching my classroom instruction in the process the intent, I attend university extension

courses, weekend workshops and conferences. Travel also becomes a high priority as does more frequent visits to aging parents. Finally, I evolve into the awareness that this also is insufficient. Graduate school and its challenges begin to encroach more frequently into my conscious reflections. Meanwhile, I am still, then as now, in the classroom for the maximum part of my workday.

I step out from behind my partitioned space. The seniors have the office with the door. Instructors personalize their partitioned space. Some space areas have windows. The staff and secretary are a team, professional, empathetic, yet there is a camaraderie. Staff celebrations and potluck suppers are included in the social functions. There are various personalities and ages, with different interests within the privacy of our personal lives.

My day begins.

The Classroom

> Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it. . . . In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. (Frankl, 1946, p. 131)

> "Sarah is in the Tent" should be inscribed on the veils of all matrons. Her spirit must be broken often. (Luther, Vol. III, 1961, p. 51, p. 201; Vol 28, 1973, p. 51)

> Christ was a true democrat. He was a believer in women; and never in his life did he discriminate against them. (Savage, Nellie McClung, 1916, p. 179)

I am sitting in front of a class of adult women five weeks into an adult education career program in secretarial-word processing. They are about to begin keyboard skill-building. Apprehensive of failure, having already taken five tests this Friday, they are frayed this last lesson of the day.

I share a quotation. "Women do not work. First the chores and then the dishes, then maybe books!" (Van Herk, 1990) The women react.

"How true!" "Perhaps never!" Sympathetic, empathetic laughter. Identity among us all. Discussion follows on the tension of returning to the classroom.

At the end of class, one student approaches. "I wanted to be a singer. My grandmother was an opera singer. My father had a beautiful voice." "Why didn't you?" "I was shy, so I only worked a little while before marrying. But my daughter is now taking singing lessons." "Why are you here?" "It doesn't worry me if I don't achieve the certificate, I am here to see if I can still learn."

Self-exploration. Sixteen years in an adult classroom and the stories, reactions, and tensions are similar. What is it about us as mid-age women that we re-enter the classroom--the mid-age university educated housewife perhaps towards a graduate degree, the high school educated housewife entering the adult education center? Do we have similar fears, aspirations? Are we on a quest? Is it really towards an improved lifestyle for our family? Where are the children? Does this wife/mother re-enter this traditional career program to improve her social status? What are her actual job intentions? Is there an unperceived agenda? Is a woman perhaps searching for her own identity? Is one graduate married woman's experience 'everywoman's?

I reflect on when I began my undergraduate degree towards teacher certification in Alberta. The children are taken care of. Husband is launched into his career. It is now "my turn." Everyone will be supportive, especially my

husband. After all, I emotionally supported him, typed his doctoral thesis, provided financial assistance.

It is on return from one of the first evening lectures that I feel the first confusion. Husband is reading the newspaper. "Listen," I say, "This is interesting I think." I am ignored. The intellectual dismissal devastates. Undeterred, excusing him, hurt, I continue with studies but no longer share the excitement. Apprehensive of failure, I approach the lecturer. "Will I fail?" Laughter. But I am not reassured. After all it has been 20 years since I took formal university classes. The weeks pass. I am loving it, getting up early in the mornings so as not to disturb the children or family routine. Staying up all night to complete an economics paper. Ten years later, working around family and classroom commitments, I graduate.

Two years later I request conference leave. It is refused, the reason given: "You have classes". "I need to replenish", is my reply. Inflexibility is returned. I pick up the telephone and enter graduate school.

I also begin a diary. "I no longer have a jobette," I announce, "but a career". Confusion at home follows--blockages, comments, expectancies. I attempt to understand. Communication falters. Yet I am exhilarated. Excited that I can learn, that I do have ideas, that I can write. I am an instructor. Why do I have these insecurities? With my growing enthusiasm, labels begin. I am a feminist. What does that mean? I am intense. Why? Would I 'lighten up'? I am puzzled--after all, despite the deadlines and pressures I feel good about myself.

In one of my classes, early in graduate school, we are asked for our topic. I'm totally unclear but proffer one. Women's heads turn, volunteering themselves as interviewees. But I'm not sure until the year of heavy courses has passed. Then I return to my original intent. I will interview a selection of women from two classes in the business careers program where I have been instructing for 16 years. Why do we as women return to the classroom once the children are 'launched' and our husband's career 'secure'? I know why I did. I know my experiences and the reaction of friends and family. Women graduate students have also informally matched my comments. What do "advanced education" women experience? How will we be similar? Is there really any difference among women of various classes, educational levels, religious, ethnic or racial backgrounds?

I go to the library. Little seems to have been written on this hidden agenda of women in the classroom. I am well qualified to research and write on the area, I think. I have informally observed and supported women for years. And why not, I am a woman! Our latest intake class begins. Several weeks into the program, a woman-student approaches. "You understand us." "Yes, I am also there" is my reply. I mention the possibility of writing our story. "May we read it when you are done?" is the request from around the classroom. Women seem very interested in themselves evolving, and in another woman's interest in them.

I am part of a dinner interview panel; I hear one man's comment. "I was approached by two women at the end of one of my after-dinner speeches.

'Don't use the title 'ladies' in ladies and gentlemen.' 'Well, what should I use?' They never did give me an answer, all they did was argue. Women can never agree, it seems." Nods from most men and women at the table. Reflection on my part, the answer next morning. This male/female interaction is Carol Gilligan's different voices. (Gilligan, 1980, pp. 173-174) For isn't this women attempting to reach a consensus agreement rather than arguing or disagreeing as perceived from a traditional male viewpoint? I conclude that perhaps it is. Excitement. Perhaps we, as women students, will find one voice with various inflections and degrees of emphasis?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

What are some women's needs and expectations as they re-enter the world of "student"? My basic intent is to follow six mid-age women and explore the central question: Why do we re-enter the classroom? What new awakening are we consciously or unconsciously seeking? What do we fear that we seek determinedly to grasp? Are we intent on the prize of self? Is it to recapture the prize of vision, of womanly wisdom, each according to our measure of that moment in time? Or is it merely a jobette for wages? Is it our heritage for our children, our matriarchal name as inspiration for them to follow? It does not appear to be self-centredness. Is it breaking the silence barrier?

This study, I hope, will reveal one woman's journey and everywoman's journey. The anticipation, the excitement, the self-discovery, the surprise, the renewal, the reclaiming of one's name as woman returns to the formal classroom to retrieve what she thought lost but is simply awaiting rediscovery,

reclamation. As a woman, instructor, privileged to become a participant, we, women as students, woman as instructor/student, "We must 'hear' the unheard 'into speech'." (Bennett, 1989, p. xiii) To dare to declare the unhearable.

The purpose of my study is to determine when adult married women return to school for skills upgrading, whether their metamorphosing through education towards career goals and personal aspirations impacts their lives and that of their families and friends. If so, what are some aspects and to what extent? Additionally, what are some of the implications for curriculum?

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The scope of this study is delimited to interviewing six women in a career division program of an adult career upgrading college and the co-participation of the instructor. The in-depth interviews are conducted over a period of 39 weeks--the timeframe of the program. The curriculum under review, is microscopic in context of the number of available adult career programs. Interviews were not conducted with other career divisions or with the academic division.

No attempt was made to interview or involve the male-as-student within the same program.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study represents the reclamation of a name. The reclamation of name and meaning for both woman as student and woman as instructor. To

sketch one's own face to view the world. To hear our voices into speaking!

The central questions guiding this study are:

A. What are some women's needs and expectations as they re-enter the world of "student"?

B. What possible implications do these needs and expectations have for the curriculum in a career-tracked upgrading program?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

> You hammer against the walls of your house. . . . Some of the walls are bearing walls; they have to stay, or everything will fall down. Other walls can go with impunity; you can hear the difference. Unfortunately, it is often a bearing wall that has to go. It cannot be helped. There is only one solution, which appalls you, but there it is. Knock it out. Duck. (Dillard, 1989, p. 4)

And so it is with us, as women, as we write a portion of our lives within the walls of classroom and curriculum, instructor and student. Within the captivity of the normally constructed career curriculum.

Before we write of our experiences, what are some other women's lives, dreams, reflections? How is the world, our world, perceived by women as writers--women we meet speaking from the printed page? What are their life landscapes like?

LANDSCAPE CONTEXTUALIZATION

> Many feel that feminism's first wave didn't give them the alternatives they need. Because of that, some gave up on feminism. But others are determined that the second wave will respond to their needs as working wives and as mothers. After all, isn't choice what feminism was supposed to be all about? (*Newsweek*, June 4, 1990, p. 67)

This *Newsweek* article of June, 1990 reiterates the age-old "women versus women". The assumed conflict of stay-at-home mothers against mothers-who-work is "played out against the backdrop of frustration, insecurity, jealousy and guilt" (*Newsweek*, June 4, 1990, p. 64)

The constraint of womanhood towards the lady image elicits the 'good behavior' rewards for its women by both women and men. It is also socialized silencing. For Lerner, "The true history of women is the history of their ongoing functioning in that male-defined world on their own terms" and she cautions women against "confusing prescriptive literature with actual behavior." (Lerner, 1979, p. 148) Removing the devaluation ideology, though, is a socially hostile act because it represents adopting Lerner's "contribution history" according to women's standards rather than being ". . . assessed according to the male-appropriate standards." (Lerner, 1979, p. 147)

The Classroom

Educating is a political act. Lerner through historical research and comparison has ascertained that "the antiquated and obsolete value system under which American women are raised and live today can best be fought by recognizing that it is historically determined." (Lerner, 1979, p. 38) and that it can be ended by "political and economic means." Through listening to the silences, the aspirations, the dreams of instructor/student, women move out of their silence. This is Gilligan's consensus caregiving.

Whenever we interact conversationally with another, something is changed, bringing with it different ways of knowing. "Who you talk to, how you talk, and how you experience yourself as a result of that talk, makes every bit of difference in moral life." (Mullett, September, 1987, p. 34)

The classroom dynamic is one micro-organism or link in the human world-chain of events. We effect and impact each other positively or negatively

whenever we converse, and this effects our personal attitudes and our inner feelings of self. For,

> moral life is lived out, not so much in the large cross-road decisions that we sometimes have to make, as in the daily, small, tacit interpretations of what we value, what is worth struggling for. (Mullett, September, 1987, p. 32)

Observing another woman's struggle for identity and appreciation must be encouraged and recognized if women are to live their individual stories, for "what we have mostly done is to describe what men in the past told women to do and what men in the past thought women should be." (Lerner, 1979, p. 149) "Idealization is very frequently a defensive ideology and an expression of tension within society." (Lerner, 1979, p. 149) By listening and hearing ourselves as women speaking, to choose our silence, we are presently refocusing that tension. We are breaking the sound barrier of women's socialized silence.

> The key to understanding women's history is in accepting--painful though it may be--that it is the history of the majority of mankind. . . . their subjection to patriarchal institutions antedates all other oppression and has outlasted all economic and social changes in recorded history. (Lerner, 1979, p. 150)

One oppressive economic contribution historically for women has been that of returning as adults to a classroom for career skill training. We institutionalize ourselves unknowingly into the world of work at wages and promotional possibilities not on par with a male's. Is this cultural/historical determinism the challenge for an adult instructor? Is it part of the unknown agenda for woman as student within the curriculum offered to pass through the male paradigm and perspective to a woman's viewing? Towards the validating of self and therefore of selfhood? To encourage and enable women, where

possible, to assess and perceive their changing perceptions of themselves as they move through a curriculum experience? Will we define our own silence?

> Autonomy means women defining themselves and the values by which they will live, and beginning to think of institutional arrangements that will order their environment in line with their needs. . . . it means moving out from a world in which one is born to marginality, bound to a past without meaning, and prepared for a future determined by others. It means moving into a world in which one acts and chooses, aware of a meaningful task and free to shape one's future. (Lerner, 1979, p. 162)

It means a gray world with prisms of colour that gradually explode into a kaleidoscopic curriculum of shared lived experiences. The lived experience of women's destinies and determinations, include the constrictions of society, other women and systemic organizational structure. In order to succeed in their endeavours, women need determination, at times defiance, individualism, and sharing.

The Role of Woman for Woman

Whether in the academic world of the university or that of the adult career training centre classroom, women need role models. Not only for the future academic or corporate image, but for independence from the constructs of traditionalism. "This is the point of tension--the conflict between old and new norms--that we seek to hold in focus and examine throughout . . . because it is our central tension." (Lerner, 1979, p. 18) This is also civilization making, not civilization breaking.

Three Ways of Knowing

Belenky, through extensive research, theorizes that women returning to formal education may move through the subjective stage, the connected stage,

to, hopefully, construct their own knowledge. Silenced women, who passively follow societal role determinants, frequently encouraged, must first move towards subjective, intuited knowing. This subjective knowing cuts "across class, ethnic, age and educational boundaries." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 54) For,

> Without playing, conversing, listening to others, and drawing out their own voice, people fail to develop a sense that they can talk and think things through . . . (there is the imperative of) the importance of outer speech for the development of inner speech and the sense of mind. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 33)

When women through formal education set out to reclaim their sense of purpose, their self-worth, their personalities will be re-defined by themselves. "Truth for these transitional women is particular and grounded in the firsthand experience of others most like themselves." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 60)

The reclaiming of self through awareness and growth is a series of losses of self-identity towards growth and emergence. "To take a stand against others means to isolate herself socially." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 65) Either "formal instruction" or "the presence of knowledgeable people who can serve as informal tutors" brings the procedural knowledge. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 93) In order for the self to participate, one must move from separate to connected knowing.

"Connected knowing" is perhaps at the heart of knowledge experienced as growth. This connected knowing "builds on the subjectivist's conviction that the most trustworthy knowledge comes from personal experience rather than the pronouncement of authorities." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 112) When the text

and context is woven, the contextual becomes the personal. And educating becomes a political act. One's "knowing" evolves dynamically.

To take an independent stance in life, "some sort of integration of feeling and thinking" is required. "The task is clear, although the solution is not." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 130) But it is only within the isolation of loss and growth on the individual scale, within the company of friends and compatriots, that knowledge is legitimated, becomes exciting and ongoing. To reflect and articulate. A sharing, a reciprocity. Ultimately all sharing will teach "the profound lesson that even the most ordinary human being is engaged in the construction of knowledge." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 133) Wisdom.

The Emerging From Silence

We walk among groups, hearing voices, opinions, validation, and move cautiously out of solitude, into silence.

> Silent women have little awareness of their intellectual capabilities. They live--selfless and voiceless--at the behest of those around them. External authorities know the truth and are all-powerful. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 134)

From this silence, into light--kaleidoscopic, prismic. Validating self through reclamation of my name--defining it within my parameters, no longer totally other-constructed. Challenging by daring to construct my own meaning for my life. Within the patriarchal system, not outside, nor acquiescing within it. Restructuring from within--unperceptively, imperceptibly--initially, even to self. The 'knowing' at first, unconscious. Breaking down an archaic bearing wall, reconstructing self stronger, indomitable, steel-willed. Beginning the living of a known life.

Within the adult classroom of women as learners of a structured curriculum, women need reminding, encouraging, and authentic reinforcement that they are "capable of intelligent thought and [they] need to know it right away." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 194) We, the student and the instructor, are challenged, bringing the voiceless into voice, for "conventional feminine goodness means being voiceless as well as selfless." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 167) This is conflictual for the adult woman returning to the classroom and "women search the eyes that watch them for reflections of themselves. They cannot get back behind their own eyes." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 209)

Woman-Self and Family-Self

Solomon (1985) learned from interviews with educated women how important the family is to furthering a woman's education. Historically, "The process of women's entry into higher education has been integrally linked with economic and social factors that have shaped American life." (Solomon, 1985, p. xviii) The technological age has brought social revolution, and employment opportunities for women as office employees are in a state of shift. As then, so now, "the demands of women themselves and the needs of a dynamic society necessitated [and so now] their educational advancement" but then, as now, "For women more than men, education evoked opposition because it gave women an identity outside of the family." (Solomon, 1985, p. xviii) How much has changed historically? As Solomon identifies,

> the central dilemma posed by the demands of society [remains the same]; how to live up to the promise of her education and at the same time fulfil her female role . . . under stress from the competing claims of family, society, and self." (Solomon, 1985, p. xix)

In her research, Solomon found that determined women used their educational backgrounds according to individual ambitions within individual constructs and ideologies.

The written history for women is comparatively new. For women until recently have had to rely on myths and dictums being passed on from a mother to her daughter, covertly for survival within the confines of family and society. As the primitive societies have handed on their culture through stories and lived experiences, so have women. Our lives are rich in meaning, untapped, frequently unrecognized in similarity, awaiting revitalization or rebirth, through education. For a woman must be encouraged to move beyond a shared experience to further fields.

> By entering and expressing herself in some more dominant art form: a poem, not garden, painting, not cuisine, novel, not parlor piano playing, the daughter can make prominent the work both have achieved. Mother and daughter are thus collaborators, coauthors separated by a generation. (DuPlessis, 1985, p. 93)

Women's validation and value has been so frequently trivialized that she unconsciously "hoards her own emotional currency while she lives her own life" (Kostash, 1990). Once rediscovered, this emotional currency adds the gold thread to a rich knowledge tapestry. This is the hidden curriculum, "the knowledge I keep inside myself." (Freire, 1990)

> Conscientization then is the most critical approach to reality; stripping it down so as to get to know the myths that deceive and perpetuate the dominating structure. (Collins, 1977, p. 301)

No one frees herself alone; "critical consciousness is intentionality . . . it is co-intentionality," as Freire states. (Collins, 1977, p. 64) We dialogue, discuss,

then reflect. Women connect at certain points. Hands must be linked in support and understanding. We live within differing social worlds, both within our own culture and globally. For women of various cultural and social backgrounds there is the culture of silence. This evolving, from within, out of silence, towards conscious, responsible choice and action is high risk.

> Becoming literate, then, means far more than learning to decode the written representation of a sound system. It is truly an act of knowing through which a person is able to look critically at the culture which has shaped him, and to move toward reflection and positive action upon his world. (Introductory comments to Freire, 1970, p. 205)

So in the listening, women claim self-responsibility towards awareness through shared reflections. And in so doing, as women, hear our similar voices, observe and become aware of our social patterns, the global genderizing. Women glimpse the mutually known, as well as, at times, the unique, realities. In the sharing and identification, there is recognition and change. How can there not be some demythologizing of the myth of superiority? Thus creating and re-creating.

Women, Living Conscientization

Out of solitude into silence, and from silence, into speech.

> In the culture of silence the masses are "mute", that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society and therefore prohibited from being. (Freire, 1970, p. 213)

What is conscientizing? (Freire, 1970). Interweaving and connecting internal experiences with external constructed knowledge is educating into awareness. The "knowledge I keep inside myself" is incorporated into the external formal

structure. This is the beginning of the constructing knowledge, contextualizing a life, conscientizing.

Women within a Canadian classroom are formally literate. However, until knowledge is re-constructed, independent lifeworlds synthesized with the constructed curriculum script, is the acquired knowledge meaningful?

By refusing any longer the cloak of inferiority, women become unknowingly, then knowingly committed to breaking the silence, to begin restructuring the social process. The process of educating, once begun, continues. Pandora's box of others' tapes, the social "shoulds" opens, and are purposefully selectively dismissed. What is an adult woman's role within the curriculum? What is her intention?

For Freire, it is the "myths of the 'superiority' of the dominant classes which cause the dominated to feel inferior." (Freire, 1970, p. 216) Within this milieu, without in many cases recognition of being within a dominant construct, women seek re-education. It is eventually conscious intent, unavoidable, that

> the learners must discover the reasons behind many of their attitudes toward cultural reality and thus confront cultural reality in a new way. (Freire, 1970, p. 217)

Removing the boxes, the labels, results in renegotiation of social space. I reconstruct my internal world; I reclaim my name, soul and spirit. I rediscover the humanity of myself.

> there is no genuine hope in those who intend to make the future repeat their present, nor in those who see the future as something predetermined. Both have a 'domesticated' notion of history; . . . Utopian hope, on the contrary, is engagement full of risk. (Freire, 1970, p. 221)

I choose to risk.

PEDAGOGY OR CORPORATE CLASSROOM?

> In our bureaucratized world of regimented mass consumption, a world in which education is seen only to provide access to the upper levels of a social and economic reward structure, education ceases to have use value. Education becomes reduced to its exchange value, becomes a commodity in a competitive system of market relations. We, men and women, become commodities, but unlike other commodities, we willingly take ourselves to market. (Pagano, 1987, p. 3)

One of the challenges within the career-training program is to recognize each woman's reclamation of her name--a woman's retrieval of her identity and destiny (a woman's "search for meaning"). Will she endeavour to remove the cloak of others' agenda for her life? To adopt the Freirean educare of knowledge includes caring ethics, not simply economic. For once education becomes economic only, there is no longer an education.

The Oft-trod Path

Many people simply do not read for enjoyment, for learning more about themselves, to follow a personal enlightenment quest. Rather, "theirs is a culture of information, a culture in which language detaches itself from things, is used to veil rather than to disclose, to distance rather than invite." (Pagano, 1987, p. 4) Women can easily be seconded, as, after all, many of us have been encouraged towards "self-censorship, [denying ourselves] the challenge of soul-making." (DuPlessis, 1985, p. 124) For DuPlessis (1985), as for Martin (1985), Lerner (1979) and Woolf (1929), an internal struggle for women is the coming to terms with the script--the social narrative and patterns determinedly constructed--thrusting muted insights above the dominant ideology.

> Otherwise, . . . endless domestic tasks will give shape to a woman's life. She will put all her energy into upkeep, not into

> living, dusting everything on the whatnot everyday of life.
> (DuPlessis, 1985, p. 126)

Alternate Directions

One of the tasks of the contemporary adult classroom of women is to encourage a voice. To encourage the women-students who wish, not necessarily to break free of their socially structured world, but who wish to diversify their talents into some areas of their choosing. Women must be encouraged to educate themselves into awareness. To risk being accountable to and for ourselves is, for women, the highest risk of all. Reconstructing a world is educare for the instructor, education/educare for the student, as in the authenticity of self, authenticity towards others is found. "Educere"--to elicit, to lead--is challenging students beyond traditional modes of being and thinking. It is I, challenging my students beyond the confines of the script called curriculum towards individual responsibility for education as enlightenment.

Curriculum as Praxis

The Script

To explore phenomenological diversity in people's worlds and roles is to begin to recognize the full range of politics. (Edelman, 1973-4, p. 303) Within the classroom, the curriculum as script becomes inclusive of everyone's experiences. The curriculum becomes a lived process, the instructor and the students the lived and living script, that in turn acts and reacts. We write as the actors, not simply the acted upon, as

> to begin with a passionate pedagogy is a personal pedagogy. It demands that we look for ourselves in our engagement with texts

> and that we try to understand the ways in which information informs, forms us. (Pagano, 1987, p. 11)

Our reality as women, can be altered, changed, reconstructed as knowledge is constructed. Educating is grappling with that responsibility for transferring the written text to a lived life.

Lifeworld Scripts

"Communication is indeed intercommunication between people in face-to-face situations." (Aoki, 1978, p. 15) But it is also a subjective communication of self-outer and dialogical communication with the self within, the hidden, the reflective, where the written word is dialogued in reflection before selecting for interpretation by another or others. Women students, woman-student-instructor, are in fact the living script, the educational metaphor.

> What most of our conceptions of the curriculum too readily ignore is the personal, ethical impact educators make on individual students, and its implication for students' continued intellectual growth. (Vallance, 1986, p. 28)

What instructors, and Vallance, frequently fail to see, is that instructors are perennial students for their students; the students also impact instructors! The process is circular, not hierarchically linear.

The Script Prescribed

> These older students, fitting in schooling between job and family commitments, have specific goals that are often job-related and only infrequently shaped by an interest in personal enrichment. Their selection of courses is guided by practical concerns. (Vallance, 1986, p. 28)

These practical concerns may be directed by government agencies or family requirements and priorities, may be all the women have and can aspire to, may

be for them at this moment the highest ideal attainable. These concerns may be geographically, demographically, interculturally related. As Madeline Grumet (1981) says: Our Beast is not chaos, but order, not fragmentation but deadly consistency, not the unknown but the known." (Grumet, 1981, p. 8) Recognizable by key words of efficiency and effectiveness, "authority" through the silent curriculum of the busy computer screen silences one unconsciously into compliance to a script written in the corporate world.

Ongoing knowledge seeking is not mentioned. Unaware of the possibility of interacting with curriculum, the student complies, women becoming the serfs of the technological world.

> When work is organized as a sequence of separately executable steps, the control over the work moves to the organizer, the boss, the manager. The process itself has to be prescribed with sufficient precision to make each step fit into the preceding and the following steps. Only in that manner can the final product be satisfactory. . . . Prescriptive technologies constitute a major social invention. . . . When working within such designs, a workforce becomes acculturated into a milieu in which external control and internal compliance are seen as normal and necessary. (Franklin, 1990, p. 23)

Using the traditional educational medium, people are educated for the convenience of the corporate world of man. Instructors knowingly or ignorantly assist in this ergonomics of the mind. Women, anticipating a future, unaware of this possibility, enter this reality.

The Ecological Script: Proscription

Perhaps, through interaction we, instructor and student, will evade the intended conscription. And then will begin to live proscriptively. No longer

neglected into silence, within the classroom of adult-as-learner, instructor-as-student, is discovery.

> The development of curriculum requires the interpretation of multiple texts. One interprets a text, a body of knowledge, the understandings, motives and interests of particular students and the constraints and possibilities of the situation they share. (Grumet, 1981, p. 13)

The classroom is the ongoing participation at the individual level of each student.

The curriculum for an ecological rather than an ergonomic society, is not the Tylerian

> no-nonsense, straightforward, systematic conception . . . (but) . . . in practice is a complex, fluid, halting, adventitious task. (Eisner, 1985, p. 13)

Chickering (1975) accuses institutions of opportunism, "conforming to persons or conforming to rule," treating education as "commodity packaging in a few standard-sized boxes" with "curriculum committees like merchandizers." (Chickering, 1975, p. 203) Involve your students, he says.

Belenky and Freire

Constructed knowledge integrates the intuitive and acquired knowledge, "integrates objective and subjective knowing." (Belenky et al., 1986, pp. 134-139) Once the classroom becomes Belenky's constructed knowledge centre, the classroom becomes community and the curriculum contextual. The career program of 39 weeks then becomes a process rather than the student as certificated product for market. Greene (1990) challenges the woman-instructor-student and the woman-student-instructor.

> Work to open each scholar's imagination. Look through the windows of the actual. Become conscious of the confinement, the

> habitual, the anaesthetic. Creating something together and experiencing the consequences creates the community. No one is shut out and there is a shared commitment.
>
> Stand back, open spaces for thought, uncover the meanings of the spaces. Stand off and think to free oneself! (Greene, 1990)

For Greene, "the technological world is fragmented, the society a careless society, fat, rich, but starving." When the curriculum or course content becomes too structured, too much the product of the efficiency expert, the cost effectiveness may become mind reductiveness. Students are not simply being deprived of knowledge, but deliberately and calculatingly denied any possibility of acquiring an interest in knowledge-seeking. For as Greene says, there is the ethics question.

> The not-so-strong a-voice doesn't get lost because 'I have to pay the rent.' Rather, her voice is "lost" in speaking out to be understood.
>
> The real business of life is to determine the real, to point in its face the ideal, and how we can move through the real to the ideal. (Greene, 1990)

Women, recognizing their possibilities, negotiate the barriers. Uniquely, according to their environmental constraints.

The Global Script

> To make anything other than random guesses about the curriculum of any institution, we need to know, not about the nature of curriculum per se, but rather about the context of the institution. (Grundy, 1987, p. 7)

For the instructor, participant in this process, critical reflection is restricted by the time element; the exploitation of woman as student for marketability the possibility. Who is in charge of this curriculum as script? We do not look

simply at the context of the inner world of the institution, but within the broader context of city, province, country, world. From the micro to the macro. The classroom is ultimately global.

The Curriculum Script of Woman

Re-education for all adult women is negotiating a passage of dangerous undercurrents, unknown whirlpools, calm waters and distant horizons dimly perceived but somehow known. It unwittingly defies the corporate world education model, socially prescribed, defined and dictated in order to keep women safely ensconced in the public sphere in roles males prefer to absent themselves from.

This re-education, for women, reverberates in the adult retraining centre to pattern that of *Women of the Academe*: "what women seek is to be autonomous and whole, not somebody else's half, not even somebody's 'better half'." (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, p. 154) Women within a career upgrading department also want to break out of socially confining roles to define their own destiny and contribution to their family and society. They hope to proceed with their life and its dictates to them with family ties and family intact. While adult women are seeking economic improvement, are many of these women within the adult classrooms also the puzzle piecers? Picking up the confusion of their husbands' and the males' world, through concern for their children's futures, are women seeking a knowledge-base to sensemake social confusion or conscription?

Since 1910, some women of all social stratifications have been determinedly moving into patterns of their choosing. During the period 1900-1930, many more married women entered the workforce. Then, as now, "most working class families lived in economic insecurity." (Cott, 1987, p. 131) Then, as now, women surged into commercial classes for clerical training within the public schools. Today, we have the adult retraining centre. We still have the segregation, the stigmatization of this career track into primarily women's work. Renaming woman student as 'client' or 'customer' rather than student reinforces once again, the 1920-1930 North American line demarcation of women towards women.

> Initiative, education and drive, members of the feminized professions were potential leaders among women, but the professional ethos encouraged them to see other women as clients or amateurs rather than colleagues in common cause. (Cott, 1987, p. 237)

Women against women for their own advancement locks them into a male paradigm. Renaming women students as clients is repeating the historical pattern of professional superiority. This renaming towards inequality also negates the professionalism and the pedagogy of the woman as instructor. This renaming places the adult instructor--within the primarily woman-dominated service profession--as a facilitator of a service industry, rather than facilitating a knowledge area. Both female instructor and woman student thus become amateurs of their classroom world. What is feared when women, through emotional intimidation, living defensive, enclosed lives silence their living? Through this constricted freedom, women find themselves concurring with the

challenging statement that "A pedestal is as much a prison as any other small space." (Steinem, 1983, p. 20) For man and woman to walk one's world together is for the woman to get down from the pedestal, step out of the icon. Should her children reclaim part of her name, does the male perceive a diminishing of his claim?

Challenging the Curriculum Script

> The woman writer creates the ethical role of the artist by making her imaginatively depict and try to change the life in which she is also immersed. (DuPlessis, 1985, p. 101)

This woman-instructor-student encourages each student to write beyond the ending of the curriculum, to seek and pursue excellence, to become vulnerable, self-reflective, reflexive, sharing and encouraging. Through the sharing of experiences of difficulties overcome and challenges met, each enables the other to create uniquely that which is one's own. Moving beyond the known. Challenging the curriculum as script demands a nurturing, caring environment. It requires pain and effort and individualized seeking. It is spunky, determined and audacious!

CHAPTER III

REVIEWING THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY LITERATURE

> I was female, aware that ordinary appearances presented themselves to me differently than they did to males, very vaguely aware that there were indeed "multiple realities." (Greene, 1983, p. 3)

Research Methodology Resources

> Phenomenology consists in the effort of regaining a fuller grasp of life, of the nature and significance of our lived experiences. (van Manen, 1983, p. i)

Phenomenology is, for me, the pedagogical practicum of the curriculum that involves both students and instructor within the classroom and in conversation. Diarizing satisfaction and confusion of heavy coursework, too busy to perceive the process, is also part of this study. It is reflexiveness of me, the researcher; of the student, observed, formally interviewed; of relevant literature. The review of literature, as well, engages a feminist perspective through its concentration on the world of women as students and as scholars. Through sharing our subjective knowledge, our experiences, we affirm ourselves. Our lives are not isolated after all! My literature reviews and the interviews confirmed this.

It is <u>field research</u>.

> The field researcher is a methodological pragmatist. {Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 7} A central feature of this work involves monitoring the research process and research design, continually modified and developed by the researcher throughout the project . . . basic to the conduct of field research is the development of relationships between the researcher and those who are researched . . . to enter into the commerce and conflict of everyday life . . . researchers who study their own society. (Burgess, 1984, p. 5)

It is using the Progoff Intensive Journal method, analyzing my personal growth as graduate student, towards co-participation in this knowledge retrieval of the shared threads and patterns in the landscape of a woman's world. Reflecting on ongoing dialogue with students, friends and literature, it is coming to terms with a woman's reality as student--irrespective of whether academic or entry-level. "Doing field research is, therefore, not merely the use of a set of uniform techniques but depends on a complex interaction between the research problem, the researcher and those who are researched." (Burgess, 1984, p. 6)

This co-participation enabled informal cross-referencing of the formal participant-as-observer role (conducting formal interviews and observing these interviewees throughout the duration of their program). (Burgess, 1984, pp. 80-81) Additionally, as a co-participant, situations concerning role expectancies and study stresses, were compared and analyses drawn from conversations with interviewees and the wider student body, thus enabling triangulation and validity of the findings.

The Progoff Journal technique assisted in identifying my process as researcher/student. It supported the synthesizing of the experience (observable when instructing, unobservable in process as student). Through reviewing my diaries and my journal I gleaned insights for cross-referencing.

> We find that a connective thread has been forming beneath the surface of our lives, carrying the meaning that has been trying to establish itself in our existence. It is the inner continuity of our lives. As we recognize and identify with it, we see an inner myth that has been guiding our lives unknown to ourselves. . . . . that the essence lies not in the events of life in themselves, not in the things that have happened . . . but in . . . inner relationship to those events. (Progoff, 1975, p. 11)

Working with my journal enabled greater observational awareness of the students evolving through knowledge-as-process. I became more self-aware of my process in action as I moved through the worlds of woman-graduate-student and woman-as-instructor.

Philosophical Literature in Use

> In our adult world we share many of our conventional meanings in language. We have, by means of signs and language, created a conventional landscape independent of any actual experiences and actions. Such a shared cultural landscape is often useful, but also often deficient . . . I am frequently not "here" where I really am. (Beekman, 1983, p. 40)

Rich (1977) argued for women "claiming" rather than passively "receiving" an education. For Rich, "taking responsibility toward yourselves" was the crucial element. Only then can we refuse "to let others do [our] thinking, talking, and naming . . ." only then can we learn "to respect and use [our] own brains and instincts", only then can we begin to grapple ". . . with hard work . . . insisting that those to whom [we] give [our] friendship and love are able to respect [our] mind." (Rich, 1979, p. 233) And these "other" are humankind!

However, first we have to become aware that we are not being responsible towards ourselves--for we are socialized into rewarding others, rewarded (and silenced) into our socialized meaning, our other naming.

Martin (1985), Belenky (1986), Cott (1987), Gordon (1985) and DuPlessis (1985), to name a few women, offer insights and philosophical support through their researched analytical findings.

We are to live peripheral lives. As I begin to walk away from the silence, I notice the stillness. It is unconscious at first, for as Linda Gordon reminds me: "We had first to render the invisible visible, the silent noisy, the motionless active." (de Lauretis, 1986, p. 21) It is painful, and powerful, as is birth. Women about women, women for women, releasing women from the myth of women against women--the most powerfully confining small space there is.

Throughout my review of literature, whether methodological or topical, in interviewing and observing women's (mine and other) lifeworlds as students, the analysis came from this reflexivity and reflectiveness. Self and other, women as people, for, after-all:

> What is truth, what is authority, how do I know what I know? To ask ourselves these questions and to reflect on our answers is more than an intellectual exercise, for our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it. They affect our definitions of ourselves, the way we interact with others, our public and private personae, our sense of control over life events, our views of teaching and learning, and our conceptions of morality. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 3)

Burgess (1984), the Loflands (1984), Yin (1984), Bodgan and Biklen (1982) all advocate extensive background reading in any phenomena under study. Burgess, particularly, suggests reading literature widely for a broader general base. Feminist research writings enabled me to view from another perspective and engage in yet another conversation ongoingly, uniquely, towards making constructed knowledge (traditionally halved) more complete for me and humankind engaged in the conversation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

> Qualitative research for education takes many forms and is conducted in many settings. We use 'qualitative research' as an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. The data collected has been termed 'soft', that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 2)

I was introduced to qualitative research through a course offered in the Department of Sociology. This course served "as a basic introduction for social science students who are coming to qualitative (or field) research for the first time." The research model was based on Burgess (1984) and Yin (1984). Lectures, readings and class discussions focused on the problems and procedures associated with qualitative research. We were exposed to field research in order to assist in acquiring some fundamental skills in qualitative methodology.

Four preliminary field work projects were required: a description of a setting: field notes: an unstructured tape-recorded interview: a transcribed interview. An oral presentation of a research proposal and the written proposal completed the course. This experience was intensive and invaluable.

Initial Focusing: The Pilot Project

For the above sociology project, I chose to observe women, led by a clergyman, studying a report on the position of women within a church group setting. I noted the deliberateness in reinforcing women's traditional socially constructed role. The religious is the moral reinforcement, the educational the social formalization of gendered roles.

Selection of a Topic

I found myself reflecting with more urgency on why some women return to the classroom during mid-age. I had not really analyzed why I had returned to the university classroom to resume undergraduate studies. I had simply felt it was my turn to begin. I was certainly more focused in intent when I enrolled in the graduate program. The question, "What motivates mid-age women to return to the classroom?" became this study. What are some women's needs and expectations as they re-enter the world of "student"? What possible implications do these needs and expectations have for the curriculum in a career upgrading program? Burgess (1984) and Yin (1984) served as the models for the study. In considering accessibility, selection and data control, Burgess guided this study. (Burgess, 1984, pp. 51-54)

Research Ethics

The Department of Secondary Education Ethics Committee approved the proposed research and the methodology. The College Dean of the Career Division approved the study. The students interviewed volunteered, and consented to become part of the study, knowing confidentiality and anonymity was assured. Individual students of later classes consented to comments being inserted in the writing.

The request for study participants rather than deliberate or random participant selecting guarded against bias. Bias was also addressed through on-going class observation of the six interviewees and general student body.

Students' comments and concerns in later classes assisted in grounding the findings.

The Site

The College selected is within the downtown core of a large metropolitan city. This adult education environment has been my professional world for 16 years. The eight-storey building provides educational opportunities for adults returning to learning.

The Business Careers Department

This Department is on the fourth floor. The programs of study are designed to prepare students for employment in secretarial/word processing, accounting, or clerical assistant fields.

Classrooms accommodate 30 students. The minimum age at time of entry is 17 years. A high school transcript is required, minimum pre-requisites are grade 11 English and grade 10 mathematics. Demographically, the classroom is a global community, primarily women. Extensive training is provided using up-to-date office equipment to equip the students for employment in the technologically sophisticated office. The classrooms are informal, the course content practical and intensive. The curriculum is modularized, testing is frequent. Currently, the intent is to move towards a competency-based open entry/open exit curriculum.

The courses within this department are 39 weeks in length in the secretarial/word processing and accounting programs, 20 weeks in length in the clerical assistant program. The six women interviewees were selected from

the secretarial/word processing and accounting programs. I instructed these six women in business communications, keyboarding and keyboarding applications, and English 33. I placed the five students who completed the courses at their work experience sites, visited the sites and received feedback from both the students and the supervisor.

The creation of a data base, multiple sources of evidence and a chain of evidence assisted construct validity (Yin, 1984). The data collecting of the six women participants was approximately 39 weeks in length--the course duration.

The Six Participants

The six women participants volunteered. There were no conditions. They were evenly divided between the two course programs. Only during the data gathering did I become aware of their ages, marital status, educational and cultural backgrounds.

These six participants averaged 36 years of age. Three were Canadian born (Ann, Helen, Joan), and three were new Canadian women of relatively recent ethnic backgrounds (Sarah, Susan, Isabel). Sarah, Susan and Isabel received their compulsory education in their birth countries, Sarah and Susan completing university degrees.

Helen and Joan completed grade nine education, then married. Anne had completed one year at a college, specializing in fashion merchandising, prior to marrying. Her first marriage ended in divorce, leaving her with two daughters to support. She has since remarried.

Susan and Isabel each have three pre-adolescent children; Ann, two; Helen, a pre-adolescent as well as two young post-school adults; and Joan, a pre-adolescent and a high school student. These five women waited until the children were in school before re-entering the classroom.

Helen, Joan, Ann and Susan are actively involved within their children's schools and/or communities, serving on committees or volunteering for activities. Isabel is involved in the cultural education of the children of her ethnic community. Helen, formerly involved in family business, is now currently involved in her child's school meetings and activities. Sarah, childless, had been employed in a family enterprise prior to emigrating to Canada with her husband.

The Researcher as Co-Participant

As the researcher, the writer, I participated reciprocally in the classroom experience, both within the classrooms of the six women interviewed as instructor, and through my personal classroom experience as student within the university setting. Participating in a common journey, woman as student, wife, mother, seven women experienced knowledge acquiring. My study evolved to reflect on seven interior student lifeworlds.

The Interviews

The taped interviews were held within the Business Careers Department of the College. Each interview was approximately an hour in length. These tapes were dated, coded, and stored in a secure location. The contents were personally transcribed, duplicate copies made, a master file set up.

There were two in-depth interviews per participant. The first interview occurred at the end of the first 10 weeks of course entry. The second interview was held as soon as possible after course completion to ascertain the students' perspectives of the program.

Interview Questions

Core questions during interview one were:

1. Tell me a little of your background. Your age, ethnic origins, education level, marital status, children and ages.

2. Why did you enter our program?

3. Who has primary responsibility for the children? Have you noticed any reaction since you began this program? (If so). How are these problems being dealt with?

4. Has your entering our program affected friendships and family relationships in any way?

5. Has your husband appreciated and supported you in what you are doing?

6. Did you feel any stress during these first weeks into the course? (If so) How did you deal with it?

7. What family lifestyle changes have taken place, if any?

8. Do you feel you have the support of family and friends in this project of yours?

The first interview was analyzed prior to my requesting the second interview. Readings of background literature continued. I had returned from study leave and was back in the classroom. A second reader corroborated my findings. The first draft of the thematic chapters was written. An second interview was scheduled for additional clarification. Information was taken from

the files on the six participants' ages, education, certification, marital status and birthplace.

The second interview questions focused on the educational profile of the participants' parents; anticipated hoped-for educational goals of their children; stress factors during the program of study; comments on the program and curriculum; anticipated future goals. Appendix A lists the interview schedules, Appendix B a transcribed interview sample.

Classroom Observation

I observed daily within the classroom as a participant in the knowledge acquiring process. The six student participants were observed within the classroom setting and at their work experience stations, in the corridor and cafeteria. Conversations with students were shared throughout the program. Observations of new class intakes, conversations and discussions have assisted in the triangulation of this study. A recent student conversation was included in this study. University conversations served as an informal cross-reference to the Business Careers classroom contextual world.

The two interviews, together with continuous student observation, student interaction and informal participation resulted in recurring patterns or saturation.

Journal Writing as a Research Tool

> Journal writing, researchers have found, creates a situation encouraging reflectiveness and explicitness, often leading to a renewed awareness of a person's knowledge. (Yinger, 1985, p. 25)

Writing spontaneously, intuitively on a chosen problematic theme, creating energy in the process, then re-reading and analyzing for content, patterns and directions emerged.

This interior knowledge world, "the language of the Self discovering itself" (Progoff, 1975, p. 12) disclosed a researcher's life as student with the ripple effects on family and friends that impacted back upon a self in change and motion. The written record of changes in process were reflected upon.

Course readings, classroom participation and presentation during a graduate level curriculum course were journalled. This journal method was used to research personal challenges--used randomly, when necessary.

In addition, a factual diary record of events was also kept. Both recording methods were personal research records of an internal world processing through challenges, deadlines, disappointments, revelations, insights, successes. Recording this changing lifeworld proved invaluable--tapping the intuitive knowledge storehouse released the use of metaphor and a writing style lying dormant. The Progoff technique also proved an invaluable tool in the development of depth perception when interviewing and observing the students and self.

Data Analysis

The transcribed, taped interviews were at first color coded. The tapes were replayed to assist in the analysis of the transcribed data--voice inflection, hesitations, memory of site, body language.

Brown paper "scrolls" listed categories from the interviews. A second "scroll" defined emergent themes from the focused categories. Each participants' growth profile over the 39 weeks was further isolated on 8 x ll paper. A second reader corroborated the findings.

By re-reading the journal and diary entries, patterns of growth in process emerged. These were read prior and during the writing of this study. These patterns served as an additional cross-reference to the six participants' evolvement.

Field Notes

At the end of each interview, reflections and additional conversations were handwritten and filed with the transcribed data.

Insights as I listened to the tapes while re-reading the transcribed copy were jotted in the margin. Significant findings within the personal diary and journal were highlighted.

These jottings were analyzed together with the transcribed, formal interview data.

The Data Presentation

The significant patterns that emerged were that the women were reclaiming an identity, becoming more self assertive. Each woman as a change-maker with quiet determination was de-gendering the socially prescribed gender role as she perceived necessary for her development. Each woman showed a determination to achieve her goals and in the process encouraged her children to excel.

Each woman rediscovered her voice, used effective communication techniques, involved her children in the ongoing learning process. New friendship patterns were formed, with the recognition of women as mentors, friends, not rivals.

Significant signposts and growth markers were noted. There was a pride in the recognition of voicing opinions and being accepted, of feeling comfortable in unfamiliar social settings.

The curriculum experience was rediscovering a sense of self. This study revealed the world behind the faces of several women and me, the researcher, as responsibility for self became more determined. It revealed women saying: "Hear me speak!" The journey would continue.

The Writer

As with Gordon (1986), "I listen very hard to my subjects, and operate on the assumption that their own self-interpretation is likely as good as mine, or at least worth a respectful hearing." (de Lauretis, 1986, p. 29)

Is unravelling our socialized consciousness, retrieving ourselves from silence, feminism? Or is it placing a missing piece in the socialization jigsaw? As Martin (1985) says, "Men also suffer when they are denied knowledge of the range of educational ideals past philosophers have held up for half the population." (Martin, 1985, p. 5)

As a follow-up to my research, I will continue researching the gender issue, androgyny and empowerment. This study revealed it is but the beginning of researching in more detail and depth the world of the adult as learner.

CHAPTER IV

WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

The future voice of women will be nurtured in the post-secondary institutes within the classroom. (Smith, 1989)

BEYOND KNOWN HORIZONS

"The problem," as one woman put it, "is always being the children's mommy, the minister's wife, and never being myself." (Friedan, 1974, p. 23)

JOURNEYING A SEGMENT OF A LIFE: MEANDERING EXPERIENCE

Follow these six women's life-worlds through their business careers curriculum experience of 39 weeks. Note their life-world landscaping, their journey through the wilderness of personal exploration with life's signposts noted upon reflection. See the streams of shared living, shared patterns, dappled sunlit moments; see the shades of frustration, confusion, disappointment and disillusionment. For these patternings not infrequently herald a life being lived towards a meaningful continuance. Note the life horizon of each woman, the plains, the roadblocks. Experience the world of six women and an instructor stitching similar yet dissimilar threads and patternings of seven internal life-worlds. Journey with six women as they determinedly reclaim their self-identities living this particular chapter in their lives. Streams of living, shared patterns, dappled sunlight, connectedness across cultures as six women study determinedly, slowly perceiving that their spiritedness is pleasing them.

Reclamation: They Wanted to do Something With Their Lives

For five of the women, economic security was the overt rationale. For one woman, the reason given was "now it is my turn to start."

A common thread was that of women as change-makers rather than as change agents. The term "change-agents", to me, implies that a woman is furthering her education to re-enter the workplace to economically assist or support her husband's career advancement or future. Or, as change-agent, to simply stabilise her husband's traditional role as breadwinner and "household head". But all six women are change-makers.

The Determinent:
What Triggered or Instigated the Necessity for Change?

All six women have had to come to terms with the traditional expectations of "wife". Joan and Helen were confronted with a divorce shortly after resuming their education. The four other women juggled home commitments, husband's and children's requirements, continued routine expectations, and control tactics.

Isolate Togetherness: Resocialization Towards Self-Care

<u>The New Canadian Women</u>

Sarah, Susan and Isabel resolve the personal dilemma and disquiet of a husband's psychological role displacement by doing as much homework at school as possible. They raise no objections as they are happily "getting on with their lives." Eventually, four husbands request that schoolwork be done as much as possible "on site".

Conscious cooperation and accommodation is underpinned by quiet determination and, if necessary, womanly stubbornness. Through the isolated

and shared curriculum experience, the women snip the invisible net of socialized role expectancies. Through identifying and coming to terms with the "other's agenda", be it husband's, children's, or friend's expectations, six women strengthen. Gradually, the nurturing ethics of care includes each woman's self and her self-aspirations. The struggle is early in the program. As Sarah commented, her husband's disquiet over her involvement with her studies to his perceived exclusion initially affected her classroom concentration until she transferred the nurturing role from him to include herself. This is re-socialization, in isolation. This same strong-minded, determined, visionary, caring woman also quietly, with dignity stated:

> I'd like to continue my education, updating my skills, to expand my knowledge. This time I am not going to stop my career just like that.

The Canadian-Born Women

Joan and Helen, with a grade nine education before re-entering and upgrading academic prerequisites, each confront an additional challenge. Their marriages break down. Adult education thus represents relationship risk and a life-threat to self-identity and self-esteem. For Joan and Helen, undertaking approximately a four-year course before the economic reward of employment, each step is massive. Each has children to support and care for.

> My husband didn't support me in this at all. He didn't think it was worthwhile. I think he would have been happy if I had just kept on working at something that was bringing money home, even if it was $5.50 an hour or whatever. (Helen)

> I got to where I could do things on my own and he didn't like it. I took it hard! Like I was married for 14 years and that is a long time to walk away from a marriage. I'm better off by myself and

> furthering myself than staying with him and being a nobody as I was. (Joan)

Rediscovering an Identity, a Voice

Ann is moving out of the "shh shh box", "the silent box". Quietly, lives are reaffirming overtly through education and covertly through determined spirits and newfound assertiveness. Validation by husbands, children and friends is, at first, assumed. Then is unveiled some lengths to which women may be prepared to go for their children's or family's future if at a pivotal point in their lives attempts are made to deflect their aspirations.

Especially, adult educational re-entry means re-discovering a self-identity--whether, or not, originally intended.

> My individual image? I was always the daughter of, or Sandy's Mum or Candy's Mum. Like I never really had a chance to find out what I was, because I always had these labels on me so this way at school you just know me for me, you don't know me for any of the other titles I have, right? (Ann)

The Essentiality of Women for Women

Towards a civilized future, particularly during this paradigmatic technological shift women must support each other. Women versus women has been socially encouraged and anticipated, the subtle and not so subtle supports and instruments of the systemic patriarchal pattern. This, perhaps, is the most difficult roadblock of all. It is the roadblock of the invisible net--the unconscious deliberately socialized patterning constructed for men and women. The silk-steel social cobweb. It includes the gendered oppression to (and by) one's own sex. One hidden agenda of the curriculum.

CHAPTER V

WOMEN AS CHANGE-MAKERS

> To learn to speak in a unique and authentic voice, women must 'jump outside' the frames and systems authorities provide and create their own frame. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 134)

Women are returning to the classroom towards future economic security. This is the generally assumed reason. The covert, is the personal rationale. Is a business careers classroom an ultimate goal or a stepping stone towards further educational aspirations? Coping with unperceived personal lifestyle changes through to course completion emerged as a catalyst for self-discovery, role awareness and an emerging sense of self.

These women, upon entering the program, were unaware of this final process--perhaps the most important. This is knowledge for empowerment, the educating process. It is not the technological skill acquired. Women's power "comes from valuing ourselves and our experiences," then empowering ourselves through connecting our lives by sharing some of our lived experiences. (Turner, 1983, pp. 155-157) These women commented and reflected on their new-found sense of selves after completing the program.

> I feel stronger. I feel I'm worth more now.
> I think I'm a person that if I want something to be done, sooner or later it will be done. (Helen)

> When you're sitting around at home you don't remember all your good qualifications. My confidence has skyrocketed. I've been growing so much it's hard to believe what I was a year or about a year ago. Like a metamorphis. It's like the whole world is out there again for me. (Ann)

> Never stay with what I am, with what I have. Never stay stagnant. I stayed home when my family needed me. Now I need

> something for myself besides. I graduated with a 90%. If I can do it here, then I'm sure I'll be able to do it anywhere, if I work towards it. (Susan)
>
> I want to continue my education. Perhaps teach. It is not the finish for me. It is just the start. I know I can do it. (Isabel)
>
> It's done me good. A lot of good. I feel good about myself. I'm not afraid to ask. (Joan)

Economic Reality: Daily Dollars and Cents

"It costs so much!" (Helen)

Helen, during the first interview, is reflecting on her daily lifeworld--her emotional life, her social world, her economic status. It is a statement, not a complaint, as the interview reveals. She is enjoying classes, but is looking forward to "making enough to support Milly without any assistance," as when her marriage ended, she was "left with a bit, nothing major."

Joan and Helen feel the classroom holds the key to eliminating the poverty presently experienced, their children's futures the concern. Each sees education as movement into an income bracket that will enable them to assist their families. As Ann says,

> to build up my image better, to plan for future items, put money in the bank, save, buy the luxuries in life and I don't mean like a car, boat or whatever. I'm content with having money in the bank, and being able to take the family out if we want to go out for pizza, or want to go to a movie, or want to get tickets to go see a concert, or a play. To just have enough food in the house or clothes or whatever, that to me would be making it successfully.

Every woman's dream for her children is to live in a comparatively comfortable home surroundings to enable an exploration of extra-curricula

cultural experiences. Lower income women have the same visions and dreams.

Social Security

Joan and Helen also want to escape from the physical demands of manual labor, its low economic rewards and the social stigmatization. The business careers route is the option--perhaps the only option.

> I'll be able to get a good job where I can make good money instead of living on $1000 a month. Because I just can't make it! I hope to make more money than I am now where I can be stable and my family can be and my kids can come to me and say: 'Mum, I need this,' and I can give it to them instead of saying to them 'No, I don't have the money, we can do it maybe next year'. (Joan)

Role Modelling

Helen had a positive office experience through a six month government program that heightened her awareness, enjoyment and potential for office work. Helen sees herself as a role model for her children. She sees education as towards self-improvement and independence. Further education, for Helen, is reclaiming her self, and she is confident it will bring economic reward.

She spoke with pride of one daughter having completed grade twelve since Helen resumed her studies. She voiced her hopes that her second daughter would complete her matriculation through observing her.

> She's old enough to make her own decisions, but hopefully when I complete my course maybe she'll see that it was well worth while.

Stepping into the abyss of single-parenthood after many years of marriage, the cost for Helen, she did voice some concern over her future. Alone, with her grade school daughter, living in a city for the first time, Helen spoke quietly, with dignity and pride:

> For my own sake if I could make a fairly good living and be able to buy a few little material things that we want, I would be quite happy, but for her I would like more.

Joan, perhaps, spoke for them all. Why risk so much? Why be prepared to cost a marriage?

> I had nothing. I was just a dummy to him. Well, I'm not a dummy. I wanted to prove him different and I did. I plan on being somebody when I leave here!

Retrieving one's self, making the inner world of self-worth and self-acknowledgment public. Laying it on the line for self, children, husband, friends. Risking all--above all, the inner sense of self. Breaking out. Who will support this fragile strength?

Social Stability

Sarah and Susan are conscious of the possibility of future economic security with their employable skills in the technological area as a result of this program. They will seek immediate employment after program completion. Sarah will be the primary wage-earner while her husband pursues Canadian certification of his profession. Her husband had left a politically unstable country without his educational papers.

> Now he has to give all the exams from starting point which is tough for him.

She could not find work.

> I have in the past had many experiences of changes in countries and environmental changes and changing of jobs due to country change. Up to now I was a lucky person to get a job. This time I was not a lucky person to get a job.

Poverty for them is a new experience, which adds to the social isolation.

> If it is short-term then we can just face the couple years, but if it's for a long term then I think we won't be able to face it.

In isolated togetherness, two people, showing courage and loyalty, share the burden of a cultural change.

Maintenance of a Professional Home Lifestyle

For Susan, married to an accountant, her skills training is to secure educational, cultural, social experiences and interaction for her children. When her 12-year old asked why Susan was going to school, Susan explained:

> Why? When you were little you were not into your sports, you were not into piano, I could cope with Daddy's paycheque but now I can't. For groceries I need that extra money. Every time you play hockey the ice time is $25. There is not that much money anymore.

Isabel will not presently work in an office environment. Nevertheless, if, in the future, for some reason it is necessary, then she will have the technological skill. This would be in the event of an out-of-province move or if returning with her family to her homeland.

> Maybe if I go back home, maybe I would need this. There most of the people have school or university degrees, but like training, no we don't have that much.

I am left reflecting. Has her Canadian skills training experience brought an awareness of a void in her own land? Has her social consciousness and response to her own people been activated?

Paths and Patterns Shared

Thus, all six women were returning to the classroom to contribute economically. Contributing to their family and through family, to society. For five women it was to be immediate upon graduating. For Isabel, it was the

future intent. Moving from their private sphere into the public sphere, they are extending their nurturing role from the non-paid reproductive labour role, to the productive economic contributory role of the office environment. Their mothering and wife role of necessity now are including external obligations without diminishing home responsibilities. Retraining towards future economic security for their immediate family, these women are carrying or sharing the economic burden.

Ann, Helen and Joan had been employed in part-time roles which were non-threatening. Their jobs were economic contributory roles to supplement the family income. Their wife roles were of the traditional pattern. So is the pattern of the three ethnic college educated women. For the two ethnic women who have children, it was only once the children were safely ensconced in school or kindergarten that they reentered, fulltime, the educational world. "Now it is my turn." as Isabel said. Or Susan--reassuring and protective of a husband's ego? "I always tell my husband. I was pretty lucky that I stayed home for twelve years."

But the economic lifeworld was secondary. The personal lifeworld was processing, evolving, unbeknown, unseen by them as too involved, too close. Undertaking a quest, observed by a quester. All six women and their instructor creating their ongoing lifeworld landscape, woman as student, woman as instructor. All lifeworlds observing, the individual streams of living connecting. Within the classroom, reaching back, striving towards the unperceived distant horizon. Women awakening.

The Covert Agenda: The Personal Crisis, Taking Charge of Self

> Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you; it means learning to respect and use your own brain and instincts; hence, grappling with hard work . . . It means insisting that those to whom you give your friendship and love are able to respect your mind. (Rich, 1979, p. 233)

> I have been more open, more myself has been coming out, they kind of look at me, . . . she talks. They'll see me for what I am, not another label. (Ann, reflecting on "the real me")

Ann is "metamorphosing". She sees herself as very intellectual. She "loves intellectual pursuits".

Sarah is returning to the educational career-oriented environment in order to enable her husband to further his education. To do so, she needs the "piece of paper". She recognizes this certificate as the ground-floor door opening to any organization comparable to her prior employment level in her previous country of lived experience. For her, it is a depressingly unnecessary first step. Nevertheless, she sees it as a positive step towards her goals in Canada, towards personal economic security and future advancement. Within their marital relationship this education is towards developing greater mutual understanding, goals, motivation and respect. Marriage and living as a shared experience in a strange land. She has "set the example" and been the positive instigator for survival. Neither she nor her spouse were finding employment. She moved educationally to upgrade her vocational training, determined to learn the technology now required for her continued career security. And her spouse now sees the wisdom in her strategy.

> He's dropping his career and he's allowing me to study my course and once I get a settled job he will continue with his study. Because one of us has to work and get some kind of financial security.

Sarah has long-range vision, inner strength, purposefulness and determination. Initially forging the path alone, they are now together. Flexing the invisible web.

The Wasteland

For Sarah, Helen, Joan, and Susan, it was a crisis move brought on by the realization that their personal lifestyle was becoming a wasteland. With ages ranging from 31 to 41, each woman experienced a crisis. Whether through depression or recognition that their current employment potential was less than their perceived personal value, they sought re-identity. Hear Susan speaking.

> I was going into a kind of rut. I didn't want to read a newspaper: I realised I should snap out of it before I went deeper into it; I needed to do something for myself, I realized I have my own life too.

There was also the growing isolation and loneliness within the home.

> My husband is very quiet, he doesn't even talk about his work . . . it seems my son is like my husband, doesn't talk, wants to watch TV or something.

Joan and Helen wander in the wilderness of unexpected broken relationships. Undeterred, courageous.

> I plan to be somebody. I do have brains up there and they do work at the odd time. (Joan)

> He had different interests. There were a lot of differences, which seemed to happen overnight. It wasn't always like that, we just fell into a rut. I decided to take a step up in my life. It was quite a big step. (Helen)

This determined step into the personally unexplored brought an ultimatum. Helen chose to continue. Alone.

For Isabel, very much within the traditional cultural-religious construct, the children are all in school and her husband has completed his educational goals.

> I have three children. I was busy with them. Now they are 10, 7 and 5, in school, so it is my time to start. It may be useful to have a trade certificate.

Her long-term educational goals?

I always intended [to gain a university degree] I have my goals.

When she found the studies rather difficult at university level, she elected to go through this career department in order to better prepare herself. Her intention was to learn the necessary technological terminology and improve her English skills. Through communicating in English with fellow students of all backgrounds she became more inter-culturally aware. For her, this experience was a social and economic awakening.

Socially, Sarah, Susan and Isabel appreciated the benefit of the inter-cultural mix and backgrounds. They made friends interculturally, improved on communication skills, enlarged their English vocabulary, and perhaps Canadianized their present social environment through new friendships.

So for some women, it seems this department is the catalyst for breaking out of a current manual labor orientation into the less physically taxing, and more socially acceptable, office environment. For the four college educated or partially college educated women, it is to re-explore, to rediscover and reactivate the original potential that prior to marriage was explored or experienced.

Holding Pattern or Stepping Stone?

I don't expect to be just a secretary all my life. (Ann)

Prior Education Experience

The formal education level of these six women was dissimilar. Ann, Sarah, Susan and Isabel had each received a college education. Sarah, Susan and Isabel were either children of professionals or were married to men in a professional field. Ann is returning to complete the unfinished.

> I took college in 1977-78. Academically this is also a stepping stone if I want to go further. I don't expect to be 'just a secretary' all my life.

Will she combine fashion design with her computer skills? Ann is mentally exploring channels at the moment.

For Ann, Sarah, Susan and Isabel, the experience of this careers program is an "encourager" to complete further education. They are definitely career goal oriented, whether their immediate future strategies are currently clearly defined or somewhat vague at this point. This current training is seen as a necessary and logical first step towards their future goals while establishing immediate economic security for the family.

For Isabel and Susan, it appears as the interim to university. Isabel has deliberately chosen this business careers track in order to facilitate higher academic learning. For her, it is definitely

> Not the office. I went to university. Everything is different, like they are speaking a different language. I know some English but you know, the math terms I don't know. I don't know, so I thought, no, to go to high school first.

Susan, despite her original opinion that she would not return to her former profession as a teacher, is now contemplating returning to that field.

Ann, with a partial completion in fashion design, and Sarah, have future careers in mind. At this point in time Ann and Sarah will incorporate their goals--economically and career-wise--within the office environment. Sarah's current interest is in the accounting field. She would like to continue "updating my skills and standards to a higher level." Ann's is in computer program design in a more artistic medium. After 10 weeks into the program, Ann told me she would like to be a manager and work with computers within the office environment. Interviewed immediately prior to work experience, synthesizing the curriculum experience, she said:

> I'd like to go into computer programming or I'd like to help design programs for children or for adults. In the arts or literature field. I would like to go back to university and get my degree in computing science or go back with my art work or my literature.

Ann's world no longer had personal boundaries, hers was a released spirit. Re-energized, vibrant, challenged and challenging. Non-focused, but focusing.

The Non-High School Graduates

Joan and Helen accessed this careers department following two years in academic upgrading. Perhaps understandably at this point, they see this career education as the stepping stone to economic security within the office environment. A social step has already been taken, with the mini-cultural displacement of recent divorce or separation. This is personal upheaval! And, together with the consequent emotional and psychological adjustments required

to survive the business careers program and graduating it is a massive goal achievement in itself.

Achieving a graduate diploma is presently as much as they can conceivably aspire to. The signposts and milestones for them equalize their personal aspirations to that of any fellow students. Their curriculum experience is costing them more. Their lifeworld landscape at times is bleak. Given their previous personal and social environmental experiences, and given their family responsibilities, and economic constraints, this seemingly first step is significant emotionally and socially. Two women wander momentarily, in some what isolated social settings, like Hagar in the desert wilderness. They can be equally admired.

Coping With Change: Dappled Sunlight

The losses some of these women have experienced in their conscious, or unconsciously determined efforts to self-actualize have differed. There is a direct parallel to the degree of the loss, relationship-wise, and their educational level when they first determined to take more control of their life.

The Non-High School Graduates

> I quit school in 1959 with a grade nine level and had not gone back to school. I'd gone directly to work, raising a family, and then about a year and a half ago, I started back to school. (Helen)

For Joan and Helen, personal exploration cost dearly. Married 14 years and 30 years respectively, their spousal relationships were severed. For Joan, it was within the first month as

> He didn't want to be married to no schoolgirl. I got to where I could do things on my own and he didn't like it.

For Helen, attempts at salvaging the marriage were unsuccessful, necessitating a move to the city and consequent environmental isolation from former familiar patterns. Former friendships dissipated. Helen confided:

> I found myself frightened, moving to the city, trying to keep going. Sometimes I find it really hard. Friends from the previous place where I lived, they think it's not productive at all. I am acquiring new friends.

In both of these cases, their socio-cultural environment has undergone a severe change concurrently with the stress of succeeding in a learning environment. The impact of the single-family orientation together with the ongoing personal growth changes that knowledge rewards is proving to be both highly stressful and rewarding. Both women are appreciating new friendships. For both women, the altered family structure created sensitivities within the mother-child relationship that were absent previously--a different set of stressors now, with the student-mother being left to cope.

For Helen, the transition is proving successful as she shares her experiences with her child. After the initial trauma of mother as student, her daughter

> has been really productive in school. She does <u>really</u> well. I think it is because we talk about school. We have <u>lots</u> in common.

The bonding between women, here mother and daughter. Through understanding, empathy, appreciation for what needs to be done. Personal understanding, transformation. Family supported, as her "older children encourage me every bit of the way."

Joan chose to emotionally isolate herself from her children. Living in a different part of the city, during the first few weeks into the business careers program, Joan recalled

> My kids complained constantly because they did not have time with me, to see me, or they had problems. I didn't have time for them. They had to hold.

She frequently was absent, her classwork suffered. Yet eventually she made decisions in favour of her children.

> My daughter was really hurt and she needed me. I had to be with my family, that was my choice, they're my number one.

Balancing responsibilities, to self, to other. Socially constructed constraints, too much responsibility, too much guilt.

Financially, both Joan and Helen were left vulnerable. But both determinedly have struggled on and are living through the experience. Joan finally terminated three weeks prior to graduating, but not in defeat. When asked to make a choice, she chose her children, re-enrolled in another institution for September, and commented: "I can go back in September and start all over again". After the initial disappointment at not completing a goal after four years, facing the reality. There has been a strengthening of self.

> It has done me good. A lot of good. I feel good about myself. I'm not afraid to ask. I can't blame just you guys for what's happened. It's my fault too.

Losses, gains, dappled sunshine.

The College Educated

The Canadian Born

Ann experienced single parenthood approximately six years ago. Left with two children to support, she determinedly placed her further education on hold until the children both entered school. In the interim, she took dull, routine, parttime work. She sustained her psychological well-being by involving herself in community and school activities. She remarried. Because of her husband's health, Ann is the primary wage-earner. Currently, her husband happily fills the role of "Mr. Mum." All are positively adjusted to his role and her enthusiasm.

> My two children think it's great that Mom's going to school, especially my oldest because now somebody else has homework besides her.

But, like Helen, before settling to homework

> I would have a talk time with the children and ask them what they did at school or whatever, and then we'd have supper. So at least I'd have some time, some family time.

It appears that this time for the family was necessary for the later academic success of the mother. All members of the families felt very threatened. Communicating and time taken was essential to growth for all. Parameters had to be set during the first few stressful weeks, but parameters drawn by emotional understanding and appreciation. For Joan, did putting her children on hold during these crucial early weeks eventually necessitate her withdrawal shortly before program completion?

The New Canadians

Sarah's move to Canada has been within the last year. For the first time since marriage seven years ago, during which time she was permanently employed, she could not get work. Unsuccessful in Canadian employment interviews, she found she lacked the necessary paper qualifications. This loss of valued employment status: isolation from family, friends: moving from wealth to first-time poverty: has brought environmental changes both within her private and public sphere. Sarah presently has "no woman who understands her feelings" nor her "humour". So for her, at present, the loss is that of being an emotional isolate.

Women's socially constructed gender roles and humour differs culturally. How do we adapt and survive these sometimes subtle differences? As an isolate, Sarah is experiencing the impact of being walled within by silence. She is experiencing the isolated impact that is uniquely woman's own. So Sarah enrolled in this program to gain

> Canadian experience [of the] Canadian style and system. I am okay with my classmates but the Canadian jokes and humour is a bit different than what I know, so sometimes I feel I'm not completely blended in. I try to learn. I like to be socialized with my colleagues.

Although her husband tries to fill the gap of her family he can't understand her feelings and that

> at that time I feel I am lonely, I can't handle all this on my own--I do feel lonely many times.

This loneliness is difficult to understand unless also living in another country, another culture, as a woman, isolated from one's female roots. Sarah

and I understand. She has the greater barrier to overcome, that of language isolation. At least English is my mother-tongue and I have the vocabulary. She can't begin to adequately communicate her bright mind given her current vocabulary and verbal skills. Who can fully empathize with her isolation?

For Isabel, this program is too structured, too like a school. Her husband feels it intellectually questionable, considering her social background and previous educational experience. This has necessitated Isabel experiencing her personal growth (cultural experiences, language improvement, raised Canadian consciousness) separate from the home.

For Isabel, the traditional home environment remaining "unchanged" is a given. Her educational experience is a somewhat unknown appendage as far as family and friends are concerned. This woman is moving into a social setting totally unfamiliar to her family and friends. She is separating the two as much as possible. How many experiences does she share? How personally isolated are her observations and daily experiences?

Guilt . . .

The stress and pressures of family obligations and personal growth has created guilt. "I know to some extent my kids are suffering" confides Joan. For the women whose marriage is intact, the role expectancies of husband and children have had to be dealt with.

Women, attempting to accommodate their family situation, take less time for themselves. They may cook or run errands during the weekend. They may do their homework before, during and after scheduled classes and after children

are in bed. Or they may forego social occasions, whether it is entertaining in the home or accepting social engagements.

. . . and Assertiveness

Scholastic enthusiasm and energy caused a conflict of interest between spouses. Sarah was busy doing homework.

> I didn't have time for socializing. We had our cultural festival, it was my busiest time submitting all my homework and we had many tests to revise. He also thought that being first time in Canada we have to socialize with the culture and the people we know. It really bothered him. He came to understand. He doesn't mind now.

For Susan, it was the Christmas tradition.

> This is probably the first time I haven't written cards. It bothers me a little bit but it bothers my husband a whole lot. I'm a very guilty person, but I just felt wonderful that I stood up to my husband and I said that I wasn't going to do it. I really felt wonderful!

Focus and new-found assertiveness. Isabel's homelife remains unaltered--she still teaches her children their religious culture, and spends weekends with family, friends and her religious-oriented environment as formerly. The personal toll to each is high.

Coping While Strengthening

How is Helen surviving the rigour of coursework and home duties?

> Sometimes it is very hard. I keep saying there are better days ahead. I had problems sleeping, so I find myself getting up, sitting and reading, quietly by myself, trying not to fall to pieces, just to keep going. You have to keep your priorities straight. I think more people should do it. I'm more open, like I have more to talk with my family.

For Helen, former friends, family lifestyle is gone. She has stepped into the unknown, succeeding, finding consolation, support and admiration from her children.

How is Ann challenged and challenging?

> I've noticed that some family members look at you really funny because they can see the change in you and maybe they don't like it? Maybe they don't like you being so outspoken, speaking your mind? Or you'll stand up for your principles now? Maybe they like you in that little box so to speak? [What little box?] The 'shh' box, the 'keep to yourself' box.

She risks becoming a family isolate, a role outcast.

In the process of personal growth, cultural barriers are crossed. Experiencing new social settings, attitudes and thought patterns, women rediscover their voice, reclaiming an identity that they can name, claim as their image of themselves. Their lifeworlds are now emotionally vulnerable, as students, together, yet alone, each on a unique journey. New territory. One landscape scene of their lifeworlds.

CHAPTER VI

REDISCOVERING HER VOICE: TOWARDS DEGENDERING THE GENDER ROLE

> As dialogue is the primary means for preventing or resolving conflicts, not listening and imagining the other invites coercion or withdrawal. (Belenky et al., p. 167)

Women as Catalysts of Change

> Like you take your first couple of steps and you're holding onto things and then you get your self-confidence a bit more and then you let go with one hand and let go of the other hand . . . you're just learning to live all over again and take risks and take challenges. (Ann)

Self-Esteem and Confidence

The New Canadians

Susan mentioned her former high self-esteem and depression as instrumental in returning to the classroom. Perhaps Susan expressed most clearly what happens almost indiscernibly within many marriages.

> Since returning to school, I realise my self-esteem and self-confidence are very low. I was a teacher before. I was very self-confident. It must be home that has ruined my self-confidence and I have NO self-esteem, no confidence. I'm very scared to talk. I'm nervous. The first week just dragged on but the second week! Every day I came here and I said "I'm going to give it up, give it up!"

Susan was a fulltime homemaker, and until her thirties enjoyed her role as wife, mother and hostess. Returning to the classroom, at first she wanted to "quit, but instead what happened is that [she] was enjoying it too!" And with this self-enlightenment and the confidence that academic excellence brings, she entered into classroom discussions.

Susan regarded her instructors as different personalities she'd meet in the workplace, and for her the time spent at school became the best part of her day--rediscovering herself and her abilities.

This recaptured belief in her own competence began to carry into the home in her attitudes and family communication. When she first started, "she was really scared." Of course! Susan's presentation of the self--her personality, her role anticipated by her husband, children and friends--was comfortable to them all.

But Susan also had her memories of self, her anticipation, her determination to achieve a personal goal, to rediscover her former vitality through returning to the classroom and formalising this rites of passage through certification towards employment. To reclaim an identity that held a part for her alone. She anticipated changes. A friend had warned her of lifestyle changes and she herself decided that

> From now until May my life is going to be my school, my house, my kids. I have set goals for my studying, doing well here. I'm my priority.

Refilling her cup of life.

Isabel's self-esteem, very much intact, remained, through quiet determination to do what she knew was necessary for her at this point in time. Isabel, adding a personal agenda to her equally identified family orientation self.

Sarah, the recent immigrant of seven months, returned to the classroom with self-confidence shaken, self-esteem lowered because of isolation from former friends and family, newly experienced poverty and a language and skills

barrier unmet previously. For her, aware of her former competencies as a student, aware of her lack of written English skills, the fear of failure loomed for the first time. Each step accomplished therefore, heightened her self-awareness in her abilities and strengthened her resolve.

She showed determination. She would access the workplace through heightened technological knowledge with the necessary certification as proof of her personal achievement. She struggles quietly as is the household pioneer within an egalitarian marriage, at first by determined choice and in emotional isolation and then with spousal support and approval. As she tries to blend in, get to know Canadians, their viewpoints, attitudes, Canadian classroom requirements, her confidence and self-esteem in strengthening and depression diminishing.

Personal Wall-Building

A fellow ethnic male student commented that once the women from his country come to Canada they don't want to return. They like it here, the freedom of choice and independence of spirit. It is the men who find it difficult. It is their loss of social image, their gender-related role-self that is at stake in their male estimations. These three new Canadian minority ethnic women have married spouses who had experienced living, or had been educated, outside of their home country. So they had undergone the initial enculturation towards modification of gendered role expectancies.

All three ethnic women to some degree are regaining control of their personal lifeworlds. Two of the interviewees, in fact, mentioned their new-found

self-assertive behavior at home when their personal agenda conflicted with that of a family's former demands.

Renewing respect for self, setting one's limits and hopefully reminding a husband and family of responsibility of a wife to herself as well. As Susan said, "It's not that I'm faking it, or that I was lazy. I couldn't do it!"

Highly stressful, yet her new experience draws her like a magnet towards the unknown horizon, the "beyond", the uncharted contextual world of curriculum, text, and instructor/student interaction. One roadblock overcome.

The Canadians

Personal Parameters. Two Canadian-born women, Helen and Joan, entered the business careers program after upgrading their academic requirements. Their self-esteem and confidence necessitated reconstruction. Each has endured, or is enduring, a broken relationship. By refocusing their energies on self-improvement they are redefining their personal life-world parameters. The medium selected is further education. In the process, their life-worlds are slowly coming together. Their children are not passive observers. Speaking with pride about her daughter, Milly, Helen said quietly,

> I encourage her to go to school. She loves it. I have no problems with her at all as far as school work goes and actually this last report card she got was the best one and it was good. That was real good. It makes me feel good when I go to a parent teacher meeting and they say that she's really a super good kid.

For Joan and Helen, there is the growing awareness of self-responsibility, of self-sufficiency: "It's a big challenge for me, to expect to do everything. To cope, myself," said Joan. For both, it is successful completion of grade twelve

and now the challenge of business careers and the new technology. They are finding they have communication skills, that they are able to take control of their own lives successfully.

> I've always been interested in having a different job other than physical work so this is really great. Last year I did my upgrading and I was quite shocked that I did as well as I did. (Helen)

Helen now has a different outlook on life. It is a struggle, emerging from the social cocoon of a traditional role-defined marriage. It is lonely, forging ahead freeing oneself of some restrictive societal constrictions; it is a personal, isolated world. But it is enriching. It is self-determining. It is risking.

> It has made me a better person, I am more open. I can talk more now than I ever did. I'm not so shy and closed in. I can communicate a lot better with my children too.

And as the confidence grows and the goals are reached one by one, Helen energizes, contributing advice and support for her children. Her new-found openness, confidence and slowly emerging independence is "for the children's sake."

Both Joan and Helen have shown defiance and determination, the ingredients of success. Both have taken the necessary steps towards self-improvement at the early cost of a long-term relationship. It is perhaps this step-by-step success while moving forward that is instrumental in reinforcing their enhanced internal awareness towards a new identity. Their self-esteem and confidence is further strengthened through their academic achievements. It seems that both identified themselves within their former marriages as intellectual incompetents and emotional dependents. They sought self-worth

and identification through a husband's approval. "I can learn," said Helen. "I do have brains, he always told me I'd never make it." said Joan. Each intends to modify their internalized tapes of a significant-other's voice.

Ann is determined to fulfil a dream since childhood when as a girl she thought she could do anything she wished and was thwarted through her socialization. She is moving out of the "shh box," the "Be quiet" box, "metamorphosing" she says. And as she rediscovers her inner strengths, gradually making it public, she is "taking more risks," starting conversations, voicing opinions, raising family eyebrows.

Ann is no longer sitting in "the silence box." Now, others' expectancies are being removed and destroyed. Although one has several roles, Ann is re-defining hers according to her current educational successes. Is Ann renegotiating her social roles, her social identity on her terms?

> My confidence has skyrocketed. I also learned that you have to be kind to yourself, make time for yourself, pamper yourself, think things through. I've done a lot of higher level thinking lately. Other people are other people and I am just me.
>
> It's great to be able to say whatever, like not hurt anyone's feelings but be able to say something if it's against your morals or beliefs or the way you feel.

Stresses and Conflicts

Personal

Conflict between a wife's normal extra-curricular activities and the new role of being a student become stressful. Some students end up in a doctor's office after burning the candle at both ends in an attempt to accomplish something for themselves without upsetting the family.

For Isabel, there is little stress or conflict. She has her agenda but neither she nor the family is dependent on an immediate income once she has completed the program. Isabel has enriched her English communication and inter-relationship skills through associating with multi-cultural students. She has acquired the necessary terminology and computer skills she was seeking. She didn't complete university before marriage but "is happy with what happened," is very much traditionally involved in family life--teaching the mother language on weekends.

Isabel has her personal goals and has been able to succeed with little or no interruption to her family. She has chosen to arrive an hour early and stay an hour later each day, doing homework during these times or over the lunch-hour if necessary. The family then does not identify her with her present student role. With no family role confusion, her only stress seems to be the inflexibly structured scheduling with the loss of impulse time to drop in and chat with her husband. Even this is resolved by her husband's visiting the school.

For Ann, Helen and Susan, fatigue took its toll, abbreviated sleep a reality throughout the program. Ann sought a doctor's advice. She then alleviated her problem by escaping into her own solitude for an hour when first arriving home. As the program progressed, four of the women completed their homework at school so husbands had their concentrated time when home.

Their success at problem solving heightened their self-awareness, assertiveness and self-esteem. Personal agendas varied. Ann took a bath to isolate herself. Sarah, Susan and Isabel used quiet determination to maintain

their position. Helen moved to a new environment and is making new friends. Each woman said she was showing through example and course tests, the purposefulness of the exercise for deferred gratification. Each woman felt confident that the determined effort would ultimately bring economic and lifestyle rewards.

Guilt over insufficient fulfilment of the mother role had to be resolved: as Ann said "I felt guilty being in my room rather than downstairs with my family." There was also concern for friends and family when homework was assigned on the first day. Within the classroom, concentration on the task was difficult when a member of the family was upset or sick. For Helen, when her child was sick, a decision had to be reached. Which part of the day could she most afford to remain at home, which classes on that day could she absent?

Family

Five women found the scheduled homework initially stressful--not so much on themselves, but on their families. Husbands felt threatened, their children caused them guilt. Each woman confronted a relationship crisis from children or husband during the first ten weeks of the program. Children feeling left out, husbands feeling lonely, initially caused conflictual loyalty--to family or self?

Susan's pre-student lifestyle had included entertaining, chaperoning school field trips, attending and participating in school activities and functions. The family was a little concerned at first. For Susan, each child in turn felt left out, playing one off against the other, accusing her of not spending sufficient time with them. Her husband and she engaged in a power struggle.

> When I go home, it seems like it's an ongoing struggle. I cook on the weekends for the whole week. It's difficult to cope.

But gradually her husband lent support, not with housework, but with the daily chores. At first, two women sneaked homework time while preparing the evening meal. For the mothers, if homework had to be done at home, it was completed after the children were in bed and their home chores were through.

For Joan, the stress of children's demands, a mother's health, a new neighbourhood and school move caused sufficient stress to provide a minor setback. Although this student remained firm in her commitment, her studies were adversely affected.

Sarah and Isabel's husbands also were dubious about the feasibility of the program for their wives. They saw this program as beneath the previous level of their wives academic attainments. This caused stress and conflict between Sarah and her husband before he too realised her determination and the ultimate value to them both. He took care of the cooking. The housework, though, was "woman's work." As Sarah confided,

> It did bother him initially when it was all the homework to be done and when there was a deadline to be finished, especially when we had our cultural festival.

She completed her homework at school because he has few friends at this point in time and "wanted my company more at the time at home."

Straight Talk

Effective communication solved the initial family, or couple, consternation and concern over the changed mother/wife role.

One husband became concerned that his wife was studying incorrectly. Was she engrossed in her studies? He would check on his wife's academic work by opening her study door. Concern was voiced. She was sitting seemingly idle. Explanations then had to be forthcoming. She rationalized: being rather an intense person, she was "working in spurts rather than plodding along." The explanation was accepted.

CHAPTER VII

REDISCOVERING HER VOICE: THE SUPPORT SYSTEM

> The tension has been building for some time as women have chosen divergent paths--either devoting themselves to traditional homemaking roles or entering the workforce and turning the daily care of their kids to someone else. (*Newsweek*, June 4, 1990, p. 64)

Vulnerability

Helen and Joan, seeking further education as the key to an improved change in lifestyle, found themselves very vulnerable, alone in newly crumbled marriages. This necessitated a move. For Helen, this involved relocating from a small town to anonymity and isolation in the city. For both Helen and Joan, it was a very massive step into the void, virtually emotionally alone, with the additional stress of children to support and assist within this lifestyle change of student/mother.

Wives

These experienced ego growth. Academic successes were breaking through their silence and timidity as their potentialities were tapped. Heightened awareness brought excitement as well as vulnerability.

There was the realisation that one can't go back but only further forward. Not only is self-esteem fragile, but also the ego as far as husband, family and friends was concerned. These women displayed initiative, self-determination, and reflection. Emotional independence was replacing nurturing dependence, overtly or covertly, in some cases. Where the family structure survived, the earlier lifestyles changed with, it appears, greater appreciation by the husband

and children for their wife and mother. There was a determination on the part of a wife and mother to do something totally, it seemed, for herself. And the family had to adapt, or end.

Husbands

Was the husband's lifestyle and ego threatened or modified? In the case of Helen and Joan, their marriages ended. Their husbands resented their wives determined assertiveness to educate themselves towards a career. "You'll never make it!" one husband told his wife.

The wives with a partial or complete college degree? The unknown quantity of a wife's new-found confidence, dynamism and interest in knowledge, her enthusiasm and preoccupation with her studies in three homes caused an initial schism within the first few weeks of the program. Each wife asserted her intention to continue. In each case, a determined effort to communicate the seriousness of her intent resolved the role diffusion. Satisfactory compromises were reached.

Somewhat to their surprise, for Sarah and Susan, husbands assisted in the daily household chores. As Susan said, "I could never even think that a year ago he would do as much as he does now." Altered patterns of entertaining and social activities were met with an assertiveness newly voiced. And the successful outcome for the women who explained their rationale and insisted on following through was one of self-growth and confidence.

Children

The children initially felt isolated and "deprived". Guilt was confronted through dialogue and compromise satisfactory to all. This was crucial, it seems, to avoid the children becoming a problem emotionally and academically. Susan had each child in turn dialogue with her and her husband over hurts and feelings. Intensive, one-on-one conversations between mothers and children occurred, determining the problem, clarifying and resolving the issue. The time taken was evidently time well spent. Susan learned, somewhat to her surprise, in a conversation with her school-age daughter, that as far as her daughter was concerned,

> I guess now everybody, every mother, now works so she felt bad I wasn't. If you are not working, there is stigma.

Her daughter's acceptance resolved, for Susan, some of the guilt over enjoying her studies, renewing and reinstating her independent identity.

A Rising Consciousness

Self-determination, grit, willpower, tension and growth as the students move through the dependence of role identity socially constructed. Each student moves towards a new-found, developing independence within the family role. Successful adjustments, compromises, modifications, explanations and communication suggest a continuation of the close family.

In all cases, the refusal to communicate and understand caused the conflict, whether wife, husbands or children. Each had to be made aware, to accept, the essentiality for each woman to personally challenge herself through formal certificated education. Isabel was the exception. Although she wanted

her certificate as well, for her the course was not difficult academically. One can assume little preoccupation with study agenda while at home.

The women remained role models as mothers and wives within the home. Once home, if homework or test preparation had not been completed at school, it was done later in the evening, unobserved. The family duties were done and the children in bed. For mother, it was longer days, shorter nights.

Helen, newly moved to the city, was advised by her doctor to stay home and rest for a while. But she decided differently.

> I thought it was better if I kept myself busy rather than sitting at home and trying to work it out.

As Christmas loomed closer, Helen withdrew from the program temporarily to resolve personal issues. She returned to complete the program a few months later. For Helen, as well, role modelling a student's life with its homework and tensions brought an additional identification between daughter and mother.

> Milly didn't really understand it at first. "Why do you have to do homework every night, Mummy?" She does really well. I think it is because we talk about school--we have lots in common.

It brought participation in Milly's studies and in her school activities.

> Now I find I'm more interested in what Milly is doing and I try to attend all the meetings and things to see how things are going, you know.

This knowledge sharing, knowledge assistance between mother and daughter brings a dual appreciation, an identification, a bonding.

Friendships

Further education may also bring traumatic friendship losses. Sarah's, Isabel's and Susan's friendship patterns remained relatively unaffected.

Ann's friends adjusted. But for Joan and Helen, this was another area of loss. Did the degree of their loss parallel the lack of a high school education in both instances? Joan and Helen were stepping out of a closed environment, protected by class, locked in a vacuum of ignorance that a poor quality of formal education frequently dictates. Each member of the unit protects the other until one endeavours to move beyond the environmental and economic barriers. This is a massive roadblock to overcome.

New Canadians

One of Isabel's friends had taken the accounting program and had recommended it. She also has two friends presently at university in graduate school. They meet regularly. They are aware of her intention to pursue a university degree. One of Susan's friends supported her by telling her when the course began that Christmas would be at her home.

Isabel's and Susan's friendships remain strong, as the friendships are within the culture as well as at the academic educational level of the husband, of the wife's previous academic background, or with an understanding of the future intent.

Sarah is less fortunate. She is a recent arrival. She is isolated from women as friends. Her conversational English is also a barrier. But she is befriended by the minority ethnic women while in school, sitting together through classes. In this way she receives encouragement from a woman or women of similar educational and social background, language and cultural memories.

Canadian Women

Ann, who graduated from high school and completed one year of college prior to her marriage, is encouraged by both working friends and homemakers. These homemakers' only disappointment is that they are unable to socialize as much with her as in the past. Ann, though, will be the primary supporter of her family upon course completion. The homemakers therefore may not feel their personal lifestyle threatened. They see no reason to envy or feel disquieted in some way.

Joan's friends wondered, "Is that all you do, is homework?" And Joan, determined to succeed told them

> You're going to just have to wait. When my first ten weeks is up, you'll be able to see me, and they did, they waited.

In upgrading her education, Joan has lost some former friendships. Her comment?

> I think everybody outgrows some of their friends. They don't want to better themselves and feel sorry for themselves.

Ann, Joan and Helen are all acquiring friends within the school environment. As their interests are broadening, as they are being mentally challenged and stimulated, some friends silently question.

> Maybe they like you in a little box, so to speak. [Which little box is that?] The 'shh' box and 'keep to yourself' box. (Ann)

Raised eyebrows greet Ann's comments--her speaking her mind, contradicting, questioning. Parents, especially a father, reach out now in closer contact and communicate as adults. Brothers are confused by the outspokenness.

But this process is supported by key people in Ann's life--husband, children and parents. Especially her mother, concerned until recently that Ann was postponing a life.

Where the old friendships drop away, new ones are acquired. Joan confided:

> You get tired of watching them sitting there doing nothing with their lives. Every day I've got a little bit more. I used to be like those women, feeling sorry for myself.

Helen has learned that former country friends

> think it's not productive at all! They would like to see me just working from day to day, I think!

Helen, not only losing a marriage, but friendships, too. She confronts the disillusionment that maybe not even one's friends appreciate change and intellectual growth. And grows beyond.

So, six women as students, are reaffirming their own identities, re-establishing their voices, unselfishly.

CHAPTER VIII

WOMEN FOR WOMEN: SIGNIFICANT SIGNPOSTS AND GROWTH MARKERS

> What am I doing here? I feel like a round peg in a square hold, so to speak. (Ann, December, 1989)

> I don't feel like the square in the round hole anymore. [What about the box? The 'shh' box, the quiet box?] Oh, the quiet box? I'm not quiet anymore! (Ann, May, 1990)

> There is so much to do with women in my country. (Isabel, May, 1990)

The Travellers

In listening and hearing their voices--and in turn being listened to--these women encourage others like themselves to become students.

Helen's one daughter has now completed her grade 12. At present she is encouraging her second daughter to update her grade 10 education. Helen and her elder daughter completed a sign language course together. Having upgraded her education, Joan's sister encouraged Joan to begin. Joan's daughter is intending to take law.

Their children are supporting and approving, acknowledging and encouraging. As mothers, these students act as a role model clarifying for themselves and their children the importance of furthering one's value through education. Helen, when it was suggested that she might wish to keep a journal of her lifeworld landscape while at school, saying: Yes, it would be something to show my children."

It became increasingly obvious that these women were identifying with other women both in short-term and long-term goal envisioning. Nurturing, identifying, encouraging; pathfinders in their own individual lives futurizing for their family and children.

While frequent articles in newspapers, magazines and periodicals emphasize the antagonisms of women towards women, these women find their support systems are cross-cultural and cross-class.

Women on a growth pattern may, in fact, be supportive of women. Does the support remain within the family unit? Not necessarily. Walking the department's corridors, or observing groups or conversations in the cafeteria, or accepting comments and compliments from past graduates, there is a support system, identification. There is a network.

As Joan commented, students share and help each other.

> Oh, yeh! We all complain to one another and help each other along the way. If one is going to quit, we say "Oh, no! Why don't you keep going? It's going to get easier." And it does! And it has! It's gotten easier.

For Helen, lonely, vulnerable, isolated in a new environment, challenged in every aspect of her life there is courage and the encouragement of empathy.

> If you have a situation when you are separated, it seems like you kind of gather together, not purposely I don't think, but sometimes when you are up having coffee you find yourself with other people who have got their separations and stuff like this as well.

The new Canadian women interviewed have been supporting each other in their day-to-day student life and living. They share the strategies used to enable them to complete their courses of study with as little upheaval as

possible to the family. Sarah encourages through positive comments her friends' strengths of coping with studies as well as children, her admiration of them for doing so.

Susan chauffeurs her children to mid-week and weekend activities.

> You know, Sarah supported me a lot. "You know," she says, "You are doing what I can't do! I don't even have kids and I'm struggling." And I talked to Isabel and she doesn't have her kids involved in anything. So I said to myself, "I'm better than anybody I guess."

This is related with quiet pride.

Isabel, meanwhile, ensures that each evening her children are taught their cultural and religious heritage by her as has been and is expected. Isabel, in her mother role, seems culturally unchanged within the Canadian scene. Yet she shares quietly that while formally receiving her "trade" certificate, she is learning to communicate in English more efficiently and effectively, and gaining from intercultural class/people experiences.

These experiences become part of one's being, to be shared with one's family. Attitudes and perceptions are internalized, sometimes despite one's best intentions. So perhaps covertly one woman is introducing her family unthreateningly to the new culture.

Each of these three new Canadian women are therefore fulfilling the family requirements as well as reconstructing and restructuring their own lives. Are they perhaps consciously easing the family towards their revisioning?

Impressive, as well, was the openness, enjoyment, and appreciation of the women in expressing their visions, their observations. Shared frankly and

honestly. Nurturing their families and Canada's cultural future through their education, towards new economic and social expectancies.

Destination Markers--The Connectors

> From Maxine I learnt how to behave, dress in an office setting; from Paula the attention to detail; from Samantha friendliness, cheerfulness and willingness to go the extra mile; from Emily excellence and aspiring to be the best one could be. (Ann, 1990)

Ann was the valedictorian upon graduating. The above were instructors' attributes appreciated by the classes. These attributes were the success markers the students identified as meaningful for them.

This subjective inter-referencing assisted in combating the change that caused anxiety and repercussions within themselves and their outer social world while students. It was a growing towards a sense of worth, self-identity, self-concept and appreciation. Identifying with the connectors guided them in reestablishing their own self-identity.

The woman instructor, as the woman lecturer on campus, is seen as a fellow woman who has already travelled the road. Consequently, this connector's dynamism, attitudes, insights, enthusiasms, shared experiences and reflections will be encouraging to the women students towards growth. The classroom experience may very well be a catalyst.

Encouragement by women for women, assistance to support and supply answers or suggestions is sought by women students. Women seek the instructor to encourage independence, affirm pride in achievement as legitimate growth. Woman-as-student requires the affirmation that a self-searching knowledge quest is a normal life experience. Thus this formal education

segment, brief though it is, becomes a part of ongoing education of life--living oneself into meaning and living one's known life.

CHAPTER IX

CURRICULUM OF A CULTURE: A REFLECTIVE VIEW: SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> Education as a practice of freedom is not transmitting culture, static values, or technical knowledge alone, but is in addition encouraging reflection and critical thinking. (Freire, 1970, p. 149)

Signpost or Roadblock?

> It has been a good experience for me, a major stepping stone. It proves to me that I can still do what I know I can do within when there's obstacles in the way, like time, money, sickness, relationship, whatever. I know that I'm more intelligent, dedicated and persistent than what I thought. (Ann, after graduating)

What is the curriculum as perceived by women as students within this business careers department? Is this curriculum in praxis a viable stepping stone towards a student recognizing self as person, therefore becoming more contributive in society? What did six women-students indicate?

Helen spoke with shining eyes:

> You feel so confident that you do finish. ["What gave you the confidence?"] "I think it was the business attitude, being treated like a professional, the instructors were always so professional. ["What do you mean by 'professional'"?] We had a lot of fun, we were treated like we would be in an office, I think. Their dress, helpfulness, I don't think I could have made it without the encouragement.

For Isabel,

> The instructors were like friends. And this I like, a teacher or instructors, to have an informal relationship with students.

Susan began fulltime work immediately upon graduating.

> The course was wonderful because it's going to put me in the workforce that I never thought a year ago I would be qualified for. For 17 years I hadn't been back to school, no tests, exams. I

> graduated with an average of 90% I'm sure I'll be able to do anything, if I work towards it.

And for Ann?

> I'm glad I chose this course. This is a good program, they put in the extra mile, the extra little detail. My confidence has sky-rocketed. I'm popular which I've never thought myself to be. I learned to be kind to myself, to think things through. I've done a lot of higher level thinking lately.

These reflective comments on renewed confidence, self-esteem, the feeling of successfully negotiating a challenge and renewing the sense of self does not focus on the curriculum as script alone. The feelings of success and accomplishment have been renewed through recognition of themselves as persons by instructors and fellow students.

This is the affective component of the curriculum. This affective component is the inter-communication, the sharing of different perceptions, the bringing into voice the thoughts and reflections within. The time-frames, the challenges of new technology, classroom structure, failure fears, family pressures, can then be taken one step at a time. The student feels understood, the classroom is a safe place, individual insecurities are seen as not individual at all. Through dialogue, the woman adult-student learns instructors have experienced similarly, that fellow students can empathetically support her.

As Ann found, during the last two weeks in class, there were time pressures from every direction--family, assignments, fatigue, apprehension of achieving the certificate goal. Students became immersed in self crises, each feeling vulnerable.

> I went to an instructor one day when I was feeling the crunch and she goes: "Well, it's only a little bit longer and you know, you're

doing well and don't worry about it so much." That was all the boost that I needed. You know, that somebody else cared and it wasn't all like tackle the roadblock by yourself, so actually there is a very good support system here.

A Signpost: Conscientizing

> To think well is not to fantasize . . . For a poem to coalesce, for a character or an action to take shape, there has to be an imaginative transformation of reality which is in no way passive . . . Moreover, if the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at that moment. For writing is re-naming. (Rich, 1979, p. 43)

Within the classroom we are also writing and renaming our lives, constantly in motion. If we, students with instructors, with each other, don't communicate, how do we voice our perceptions? How will we, students and instructors, perceive our differences, our similarities? Through speaking, and listening, we, student and instructor, react, act, support, reaffirm and re-establish ourselves. As a spiral, broadening and deepening our awareness and knowledge base, student and instructor moves upwards towards the growth that only results from understanding, accepting, and therefore appreciating self and others.

These comments from six adult women students are extremely important when considering curriculum revisions. Will adult students become mind-locked? Will the curriculum subliminally devoice the adult woman within this traditional woman-skill orientation? How literate is a curriculum then? I ask myself: Would I choose this curriculum for me? For my daughters? Am I maintaining professional integrity and ethics? For it was obvious from the formal interviews that questioning any aspect of the curriculum is crucial to the student

successfully completing the course. That questioning includes the personal growth dimension, the process.

What students initially seek is self-assurance and self- validation. Within this context, learning takes place. When the environment through affirmation and encouragement is safe, then the student recognizes and incorporates Freire's "knowledge I keep inside myself." The curriculum becomes contextualised, learning becomes a lived experience. A signpost on looking back reads "conscientizing". For, as Ann said, reflectively,

> When you're sitting at home, you don't remember all your good qualifications and when you go back to school you drag it out of you so you can't forget them.

A Signpost: Contextualising

The children's or adolescent's needs on the mother-student in single- or traditional family settings must also be part of the curriculum in context. Children ultimately come first if we observe five women interviewed.

> You put your children first, you always will, that's part of your life. (Joan)

When asked what effect four years of schooling had had on her self-esteem and self-concept, even though she was terminating shortly before course completion, Joan replied:

> You know, I can't blame just you guys for what's happened. It's my fault too. I carry part of the problem.

Maturity.

Women whose consciousness has been raised to surmount the obstacles of silence and isolation, face within their known-world social rejection

and confusion. This demands commitment. This is becoming proactive with life rather than reactive. To reconstruct a personal life-world is an isolate journey. But for Helen, it has been well worthwhile:

> It was worth it and if I don't feel I will be as successful as I could be, it was still worth it. It was the best two years of my life. It was hard at times, as you well know, I went through some bad times, but it was worth it. It gave me something to keep me motivated, to keep going.

Reflectively, Helen spoke of herself--her goals, her personality, her intentions to continue her educating now she had finally begun.

Contextualising the classroom experience to include self is the process of educare for the instructor. Observing and supporting, encouraging and challenging the student towards greater authenticity of self, the student and instructor together challenge the traditional modes. The process of evolvement is observed. It results in a curriculum transcript of transcendence and transformation. The curriculum is not curriculum until the student individualizes the script.

A Signpost: Cultural Interchange

> "Painting should be a re-creation of an experience rather than an illustration of an experience." His paintings never represent their subject, they resonate with it. (Gordon Smith as interviewed by George Woodcock)

As with a memorable painting, so with curriculum as experienced. Adult instructors must encourage students towards cultural critical consciousness and awareness of the validity of their contributions. Validation of self and selfworth is validation of a culture and society. This is creating the curriculum, re-creating the curriculum document/script towards meaning. Listen to Isabel:

> I understand people more, the way they think and the way they behave, the things they believe in and why. And accept that their behavior and acts towards some things are completely different from mine. I learned more about people and their culture and accept them the way they are.

This, she felt, came through class participation, listening, out-of-class conversation and observation. She now understands her children's Canadian school environment and its socialization much more than while at university. This is possibly because there was more dialogue, more interaction within and outside of the classroom. It may also be because of the cultural and class mix. This careers department is not quite so culturally cloned and merged into the mass.

A Signpost: Cultural Capital

> Whenever human activities incorporate machines or rigidly prescribed procedures, the modes of human interaction change. In general, technical arrangements reduce or eliminate reciprocity. . . . Reciprocity is not feedback. Feedback is a particular technique of systems adjustment. . . . Reciprocity, on the other hand, is situationally based. It's a response to a given situation. It is neither designed into the system nor is it predictable. Reciprocal responses may indeed alter initial assumptions. (Franklin, 1990, pp. 48-49)

> If we are to be honest with ourselves, the curriculum field itself has its roots in the soil of social control. (Apple & King, 1976, p. 112)

As a business careers division, we are writing curriculum for a technological business world. Whose interests are being served in writing the technologically oriented curriculum script? Will it enrich society through enriching the lives of classroom participants or will this curriculum be used to supply a techno-service of poorly paid female labour? Will a program

curriculum enable an extension of a woman's reproductive capital (economically trivialized) into a systemically trivialized productive capital role?

The students interviewed clearly showed that technological skills for job security were only part of the curriculum for them. Rather, we met women no longer neglected into silence. Within the classroom of adult-as-learner (including the instructor), we saw individuals awaiting discovery, of self and other.

> Take the stranger's vision and notice the everyday. Work to open each scholar's imagination. Look through the windows of the actual. Become conscious of the confinement, the habitual, the anaesthetic. Creating something together and experiencing the consequences creates the community. No one is shut out and there is shared commitment. (Greene, 1990)

Education or Training?

> In Plato's Just State, where, because of their rational powers, the specially educated few will rule the many, a young man's image of himself as "only a body doing a job" is desirable. . . . The Platonic divorce of reason from feeling and emotion and of self from other is built into our prevailing theories of liberal and vocational education as well as into our very definition of the function of education. (Martin, 1985, p. 191)

> Feeling, emotion, intimacy and connection. . . . We must recognize, however, that to challenge the productive/reproductive dichotomy is to call for a basic rethinking of education. (Martin, 1985, p. 191)

Apple and King (1976) and Edelman (1973) are emphatic in their belief that one of the functions of education other than to train in literacy is for conformity to the social strata, to train for economic placement. These curriculists believe that even in kindergarten, children are being taught to conform, to identify learning with "work", and play with "wasting of time." We

carry this further, and skills training is separated from education into the sphere of employment, and education is equated with the core, academic subjects.

How much students are encouraged to explore their own realities and make contributions to the curriculum will determine how meaningful the educational process will become individually.

If walled in by the silence of an over-structured curriculum, linear, objective, efficient, how will women students move from the "shh boxes"?

> The symbolic violence towards the professional woman and the working-class woman anticipating social advancement and an easier lifestyle are similar. For the working-class woman, her powerlessness and the chauvinism of the professional male dominant order displays itself in curriculum cuts and the degree of knowledge given. For the professional instructor, it displays itself in symbolic violence through exclusion from the informal communication process, collaboration in work projects, professional information. (Delamont, 1989, p. 252)

Education as a curriculum of technology is the most efficient and effective for the minority groups. This technological curriculum is the most efficient and effective means of serving the population, to maintain the economic class structure. Packaged materials fit a segment of the population into the system. Whose interests are being served? For packaged materials have minimal opportunity for group interaction, minimal opportunity for reflective, critical thinking. And a segment of women remain mind-locked, and a culture is weakened as women impact children, the future society.

A Signpost: Personal or Political?

> The best teachers and the most sensitive curriculum planners can shape educational experiences that in turn shape students' personal commitment to learning. (Vallance, 1986, p. 29)

Six women felt appreciated for themselves; they were renewing appreciation of self. And inter-culturally, across classes, women were growing and learning from women.

Flexibility within the curriculum allows for acceptance of where the student is as change is ongoing, and education is towards change, life and living. To encourage ongoing scholarship and learning, the learning must be cognitive and affective; analytical, logical and intuitive; factual and imaginative. Knowledge then, is more likely to be ongoing and used as a tool towards living life further into meaning--as it will be internalized.

Applied curriculum has the tacit element. The affective component. This is the cultural and economic capital, the undercurrents, expectancies and permissibilities of the valuative elements of education that Edelman and King refer to. It is the social and economic meaning of curriculum; curriculum-in-use.

A Signpost: The Personal is Political

It is in interchange and interaction that the curriculum becomes subjective and therefore more meaningful. It becomes an interlinkage of instructor, student, discipline and society. Aoki (1978) terms this the man-world perspective. It is this hidden quality that cannot be quantitatively and statistically tested--the perceptiveness, the ability to "walk-in-other's shoes" that is the quality of the hidden curriculum providing the richness, the possibility for the self-actualizing component, for living one's meaning of life.

It is this possibility that is role modeled and enriches the virtual curriculum to actuality--a natural, interactive process that acquires meaning and long-term

value through experiencing. The self-actualizing curriculum perspective, according to Vallance, has suffered the most, losing to the changes in society that has become increasingly practical and job-oriented in its demands on curriculum.

As educators, to withhold this challenge from any segment of the population is to withhold choice. This is politicizing a group of women within society towards a social class-caste status. It is depriving the social world of creative contribution, ensuring the monotony in assumed safety of the sameness circle. It is downward spiralling.

The curriculum is taught within the historical context of the present. What are our individual and collective lives? How much are our social worlds structured around us according to the dictates of cultural capital? These are the boundaries. How much do we risk? "Conventional feminine goodness means being voiceless as well as selfless." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 167) Imagine the conflict this may cause the adult woman returning to learning. Yet, if society is to survive pluralistically this social conditioning must be revised. It is, after all, in affective dialogue that validation occurs and ideas respected or challenged.

My interviews revealed that in some cases women are returning to the classroom with the unknown or hidden agenda to catalyst social change, against and despite all odds and costs.

> Milly is a very bright little girl, I hope she goes on, even university. I feel that she'd do very well in whatever she chooses to do. (Helen)

> I would like her to go to university and finish her degree. She's a smart little girl. She said to me: "I want to be a doctor." (Isabel speaking of her daughter)

For her own culture as a woman? Isabel, on her graduation day. "I have so much to do!" This was the first overt indication that she had appreciated and was intending to enlighten some women of her country. A momentous decision.

A Signpost: Confusion

Joan wanted to continue contact with instructors once she left the classroom. She was encouraged and reinforced in her goal-seeking through admiration, respect and mentoring an instructor. Subjective inter-referencing is essential towards a growing sense of worth, self-identity, self-concept and appreciation. It helps combat the change that may cause anxiety and repercussions within the social setting on entering the program. New networks must be set in place. An observant instructor assists.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle a woman-student will confront is her pleasure felt in returning to learning, rediscovering that she can learn! She is now nurturing self, replenishing what has been stolen from her unawares by all as everyone's socially prescribed due. To combat her pleasure in her accomplishments, accusations will be hurled from her various terms of human reference that she is becoming non-nurturing.

The adult woman rediscovering her identity through university education, the adult woman appreciating her new-found sense of self in an adult career upgrading department--their paths merge. This self-awareness and growth is a

series of losses of other-identity for self as one walks the confusion path to emerge more self-aware. Classroom results prove that excited in the discovery of reclaiming their intellect, women's perceptions of their own worth and possibility to achieve soar.

There is a determined focus on self-development through education. It is a growing realization that one has the right to self-determination. It emerges through conscious rationalization (as with Isabel's "it is now my turn") or a deliberate intent (Ann's "I have a goal.")

I learned--much to my surprise--that my married social world was indeed as Belenky found. That insisting on my graduate pursuits necessitated taking a stand (perceived as against others) and thus isolating myself from my socially known world. It required new friendships. It brought wider dimensional world views. It wasn't I who stood against others. It was perceived so by them. But at the same time I knew that as risk-taker my children would ultimately experience themselves more fully. The impact of my new-found self-realization in knowledge-acquiring caused and resulted in role confusion for all, the more difficult to understand in a professional household. The perceived alternative, to me, is dead living.

A Signpost: "Tapes to Live By"

"Others' tapes" may be particularly strong in the middle years. Powerful social forces will legitimate roles: the role of mature woman, quietly spoken, deferent; the role of wombless therefore useless as if the womb is her womanhood--for this there are ample suggestions, remedies, and prescriptions;

the role of grandmother, kindly and ever pleasing. Woman will be verbally applauded as she, emotionally anaesthetized, is culturally assisted towards this end. Towards numbness making and final conditioning. There is an alternate route that eventuates in a woman of her own making. This is perceived as radical, iconoclastic, only later admirable.

This is the final stage is the life decision for both men and women. He is encouraged to become the wisdom figure by utilizing his career base, while she is to lapse into renewed social silence after her final death-throes of attempted search for her life's meaning. A few survive to live meaningful lives as women, in their own right. Within the adult classroom, one may glimpse this determined struggle.

Breaking out is particularly difficult as one contends with both accusations of selfishness and the devastation of non-identity to self. Acknowledging of one's self-worth as well as that of others is crucial to coming to terms with self within the classroom. To reflect and articulate, and within this action, to reconstruct knowledge towards a meaningful existence. To authenticate oneself, possibly for the first time.

Connecting our experiential knowledge brings this self-awareness, this self-knowledge, this ongoing reinterpretation of woman as self, not other, that moves towards newness causing society's knowledge-base to shift. Imprinting personal experiences (physical, emotional, visual, spiritual) upon the text to recreate the subtle differences within the similarities, the knowledge circles begin to spiral upwards. Life as artform, not craft to be copied, evolves. As an

artform, the life is seen after the making, encouragedly fleetingly glimpsed as one purposefully sketches the landscape of one's life.

The Travellers and the Connector: Reflecting Upon Some Women's Experiences

Relationships

A lark flew high, in wide swirling motion, free, yet giving to all who listened a song. An exquisite song of life and freedom of spirit to all who listened and observed. "Come join me in your own life dance," her spirit said through her song and her movements.

And a man envied the bird and coveted her song. He encouraged the bird to use a tree in his garden, while allowing the bird to fly off and share its song, its joyful soaring, knowing that it gave joy to others and encouraged their freedom. And the bird favored his tree and each day sang delightedly for him.

Almost indiscernibly, but calculatingly, cunningly, and with deliberation, the man bondaged the blithe spirit. The song and freedom of the lark would be his alone. He would command the song. The lark had babies, so he invited and courted the lark by giving protection to these small ones. By including them in the garden.

Gradually, though, he inflicted cruelties. He would provide special seeds occasionally--just enough for the birds to feel their songs were treasured. But then these favours would be withheld and the birds began to wonder: "Was there something wrong with their song?"

In due time, he built a cage and caught the lark at a moment in time when she was singing her song most beautifully, when her spirit finally was

soaring for all to share in and grow through. He saw this, he envied, he controlled. He clipped her wings little by little at first, then one day in a rage he broke her wings and placed her in this cage with the door wide open.

And the man expected a song. All for himself. "Sing as you used to!" he would say. She could not--he'd broken her spirit when he destroyed her wings. The spirit that God had created to give people--but especially the man--the joy of living. And worse, the bird knew she could no longer help the man.

And he destroyed a family. The little birds, seeing their mother with no song and unable to fly with broken wings, grounded themselves and in turn silenced their songs. And the broken-winged, songless mother looked at her babies and grieved within. Frozen within silence.

And the man blamed the lark for ceasing to sing.

Spirit Free

The silent bird in the cage looked out on the garden at the beautiful tree in the sunlight. And her spirit grieved for what had been. The man, confident in his control, busied himself in his activities. Ridiculing and taunting her, he would leave her an isolate in her open-doored cage, in the solitude of aloneness.

Slowly, unconsciously at first, the bird, her eyes sightless without her song, reflected on the sunshine, the sky and the garden tree. Memories of freedom and the beauty of the universe and experiences slowly recolored her dormant heart. She reflected more deeply. And she recalled birds in distant lands that had soared and sung with her and asked her to sing their song. And

in the darkness of night, within her cage, tears of humiliation, betrayal and helplessness fell. And the Creator waited.

Some years passed. Then one sunrise, a strange bird alighted in the tree in the garden. Noticing the voiceless stillness of the lark, this bird sang its song of life and freedom, of spirit and of joy. The lark recalled how she had sung delightedly for the man and her heart opened in warmth, love and gratitude for the song. The bird returned regularly, and one morning, invited the lark to sing. Diffidently at first, shyly and quietly, not wanting to intrude, the lark sought her voice. The strange bird understood, and gently waited. And in so doing, the silenced bird rediscovered her song.

And the Creator sent different birds to the garden tree. Each bird a kaleidoscope of different colors, each a rainbow on her soul. Her soul began to reflect these colors. And the lark re-visioned the beauty of the smallest flower, the awe of the sunset, the seasons and the rainbow. And gradually, quietly at first, she began to sing. The man, secure in her confinement, continued his activities and did not hear the singing.

Unnoticed by the man or the bird, her wings began to strengthen and feather. Until one morning she burst into the most glorious song of all. A song of gratefulness, joy and understanding.

Unconsciously flapping her helpless wings, the lark, finding them strengthened, flew from her bondaged silence, and, nestling in the sustaining higher currents, soared into the sun and freedom. And the Creator smiled.

Symphonies

The bird, gazing at the cobweb, saw glistening in the sunlight, a drop of dew. Within the well of her soul a droplet; an image of the house and cage. Empty.

And the bird slowly began to recall the once silenced song. Her soul's song.

Joy: of the small child awakening to a new day. Celebrations of simple moments, of life's dance and song. Continual.

Passion: of spirit. Intensity. Vitality. Independence. Warmth, laughter, sunshine. Earth's pulse.

Exuberance: soul soaring. Universe linking creation's dance.

Uniqueness: God's person. Shadowless depths of sunlight dancing in the eyes--soul's window.

Naivete: in tune with this universe. Spirit soaring.

Abandonment: to life's cycles. Seeds and flowers. Buds and blossoms. Nature's scythe. Life's reaping.

Growth: Nature's power source.

And the bird reflected on the silencing song. The Role!

Deliberate, subtle, slow. She, trusting. Caged from without to within. Numbed feelings. Eyes pools of a silent scream; ripples of anguish. Hidden, to her.

Nature, universe, spirit--dulled in the seeing.

The bird reflected God's song.

Nature and human--one.

Each soul individual symphonies in tune with the universe. Eternity to eternity. Centred.

And the bird saw:

Life's song. Universe experiencing.

Her eyes mirrored life experiences, ripples of timelessness, eddying depths.

And wrote her symphony--her journey of life.

See Appendix C for a graduate woman's experience.

A CO-PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCE: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

> You climb a long ladder until you can see over the roof, or over the clouds. You are writing a book. . . . You climb steadily doing your job in the dark. When you reach the end, there is nothing more to climb. The sun hits you. The bright wilderness surprises you. You had forgotten there was an end. You look back at the ladder's two feet on the distant grass, astonished. (Dillard, 1989, pp. 19-20)

And so we write our lives.

There is no doubt the challenge that the woman as instructor/woman has before her in the adult classroom, together, alone. Challenging the curriculum, in fact the challenge of the curriculum, is to personalize it towards self-growth and self-determination. How can one rewrite the script of what is? On campus, experiencing women as lecturers was experiencing me, living outside of myself. Thoughts were internalized, conscientized, synthesized. My students unknowingly experience themselves living outside of themselves. Processing towards reclaiming identities.

The Script Called Curriculum. The Educator's Role?

> "We like your classes." Oh? "Yes, you are a woman's woman." What do you mean? "You understand us." (February, 1991)

> To establish an identity is only a part of the growth process. We must understand the forces that are working against this process both within us and without. (Schaef, 1985, p. 36)

The educator's role is living the script, the text, the students into the revitalisation of spirit. The co-participatory experience of shared experiences is part of the curriculum. The classroom, the curriculum, is one component in the continuation of a life's journey, hopefully assisting further discovery. When a woman as instructor encourages and assists in voicing thoughts, ideas, experiences, reciprocating her lived experience, there is a knowledge sharing, perhaps critical, of both known realities, bringing change, courage, growth. There is empowerment through reflection, critical thinking, discussion, dialogue. There is a responsibility, accountability, an ethics towards self. Not power over, but power for, towards a future. Women, responsively respecting each other's humanity, and listening into speech, move out of silence.

The Script: A Re-Evaluation

> In high school, the polarization between feminine attractiveness and independent intelligence comes to an absolute . . . too much intelligence or intensity may make her unmarriageable. (Rich, 1979, p. 243)

According to Lerner (1979), women are brainwashed into equating their inferior status with femininity (p. 40). It is to independent intelligence and intensity that I, as co-participant, instruct. It is the classroom and curriculum being reconstructed towards maximum aspirations, challenges and acknowledgment of one's individual value. I request excellence, reflection, refutation, acceptance, understanding of self and therefore of others. This is towards wholeness, authenticity, integrity, true humanity. It is vital that I listen to the silences, the aspirations, the hidden agendae, the determination to work for the betterment of their children--and therefore the future generation of a country.

For women must re-vision within the adult classroom towards reevaluation of self--and this involves the instructor as well as the student, each at her personal level of growth. This is knowledge for empowerment, for self-responsibility, rather than for opportunism or mere survival.

The Script: Reconstruction

Women sharing are women remembering, empowering, towards knowledge socially reconstructed. Within the intercultural classroom of shared experiences are heard similarities and differences towards acceptance and awareness. Listening to each other's scripts while researching the given curriculum, this curriculum becomes an evolving, lived and living experience, enriching all lives. Within the classroom, women unspokenly acknowledge and validate the woman--whether instructor or fellow-student--who catalysts their development.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is to become actively personable when society decrees passive reaction and dignified restraint. The constraint of womanhood towards the lady image that elicits the good behavior rewards for its women. No longer presupposing an either/or dichotomy, within this classroom are personalities in their own right.

The Script: Choice-Taking, the Spirit's Song

The road towards self-determination is proscriptive. A woman accepts and validates her own experiences, deeds and feelings towards her own self-determination and in turn acknowledges other women's rights to their's. She begins formally writing her own life. The classroom and curriculum script is

simply one focuspoint. The classroom becomes only one link, one micro-organism in the world chain of development or continuing sublimation for pseudo-gain. She takes the choice! Liberating the human spirit requires personal reflection and personal challenge. It is to hear a stilled voice into speaking.

The Script: Knowledge? or Knowledge Brokering?

Reviewing six women's verbal scripts, their aspirations, wishes, and dreams are heart-rendingly humanizing. All six women were concerned for family. All were releasing themselves from formerly taught social paradigms, overtly and covertly.

The empirical, analytical orientation, the factual, scientific enquiry is patriarchal. It presupposes objectivity; it is frequently subjective sterility. It is only when making the objective also subjective that knowledge becomes a lived experience. This threatens the predictability of the curriculum because humans by their very nature are unpredictable.

As well, this reductionist knowledge is socially, culturally and intellectually destructive. For the technician of the technical, empirical-analytical curriculum:

> there exists a view that human and social life can be explained away with degrees of certainty, probability and predictability. A researcher within this orientation assumes a detached stance toward his world, which through his intellect and will, attempts to subdue it. (Aoki, 1978, p. 13)

In the writing of the efficient, more socially controlled curriculum there is an absence of seeing self as the subdued by the larger order. In the myopic desperation to control the knowledge source and base, when businesses are

wanting to impact on the curriculum, it may be for technical control. But, true knowledge is shared in the excitement of the knowing.

The Script: Co-Participatory Artists of a Life

Whether in the academic world of the university or that of the adult career-training centre classroom, some women will identify. Not necessarily role models of the future academic or corporate image, but that of the intellectual woman, pursuing knowledge for knowledge's sake, encouraging excellence, daring to strike an independent path outside, while within, the constructs of traditionalism.

In so doing, will answer to Virginia Woolf's comment when barred from entry to an Oxford library: "I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in . . . (p. 24) It is better to be locked out! I am living my meaning, I am defining my space. I will name myself! Then a woman unknowingly begins consciously writing her life--catalysts, pathfinders, artists of a life. The challenge that is risk.

The Script: Journeying

This is perhaps part of the hidden agenda of any curriculum offered, to pass through the patriarchal paradigm and perspectives to a woman's viewing. Woman as instructor, woman as student, each is journeying. And in the validating of oneself, validating our children, our futures. The curriculum is enriched in dialogue. One, or several wordless voices behind the curriculum script in the writing now become lived, and enlarged.

It is in the interchange of "facts" and discoveries that new ideas evolve. The curriculum gathers meaning for each individual according to his/her present terms of personal reference. The individual within the classroom reconstructs that curriculum for himself/herself. Not to be molded into conformity, a person is presented, allowed and encouraged the challenge, opportunity and expectancy to use the information as process, as enrichment, towards a further understanding of a personal life of meaning.

The women interviewed allowed us a glimpse. These glimpses are women-as-students' common experiences. Women writing their individual life-landscapes, realizing the commonality of human experience, begin to maximize their potential through classroom dialogue, sharing fears, successes, frustrations. This is the hidden curriculum; this is curriculum as artform; this is living the landscape of one's life, one path of the moment the classroom. The sharing of one's landscaping is empowering. It is the prime responsibility of one woman to another, for the silenced non-sharing has been our weak link in the chain of women's human history.

Within the confines of the career-upgrading program, as within the university centre, the valued lessons are in the nurturing relationships among friends, teachers, community. Knowledge constructed, one reconstructs through interweaving textual and contextual experiences. And returns it, sharing.

The Script: Belenky as Praxis

For Belenky and colleagues, the metaphor for women interviewed when developing their own self-concept was that of finding a "voice". Their work, they felt, was distinguished in that they put "flesh and bones on theory by tracking in individual lives the ideological perspectives laid out by others." (p. 19).

For six women, within the context of the career upgrading classroom, within an affirming environment, we, as women, evolved. This is professional ethics towards other and self: of caring, authenticity and integrity, of taking responsibility to forge one's own path. This value system encompasses equally instructor and student. It is ongong professional development and instructional integrity.

The Script: Authority--Self or Other?

> Authorities hold considerable leverage and can be in particularly strategic positions to help these women find the power that can reside in their own minds, as well as in the minds of others. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 49)

Woman as instructor/colleague, is not authority. Each woman is, as she moves towards greater self-assertion, self-awareness, self-confidence through a fragile ego, supported, encouraged and reinforced by new, student-shared friendships. I, as co-participant, will facilitate, will insist on voices.

Because I enjoy the academic freedom of the university classroom, the interaction among us all, the challenging of intellects, both adult instructor and professor, so I reciprocate within the career program. As women, question the facts by exploring our cultural experiences--women's opinions are also valid.

This is professional development, instructional integrity and the ethics of caring. This is professional and personal risk-taking in its power breaking.

The Script: The Circle Spiralling

When women students return to the adult classroom, it is with diffidence and a feeling of powerlessness. I recall this same experience and the silent appreciation towards the consideration, empathy and respect that the university instructors gave me as I set out to unravel my self. My self long lost in considering others first--their opinions, needs, development--societally encouraged, with me unaware of the game of intent. So I facilitate, and insist on us hearing and listening to each other, to hear the unique wisdom deep within. Society continues to survive through glimpses of this uniqueness.

I observe the growing awareness, determination, inner direction and participation through encouragement and identification. Six women interviewees have shared their unfolding. Five egos were fragile initially. New friendships and ties were essential. Through honesty and genuineness, through interactive feelings identification, six women, representative of adult women learners move towards an autonomous self-identification and authenticity away from others' self-centred defining of their selves.

> Since the nature of thought and the ways of knowing associated with subjectivism have much in common with myths and stereotypes about women's thought in that it is intuitive and personalized, we must consider what the adaptive utility and drawbacks of subjective knowing are for women living in our society and times. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 54)

When women through formal education set out to reclaim their sense of purpose, self-worth, and direction, their personalities will be redefined by

themselves. Class observations, cafeteria observations, conversational interludes with students reinforce this statement.

The Curriculum Connecting

> Connected knowers begin with an attitude of trust; they assume the other person has something good to say. Because all opinions come from experience and you cannot call anyone's experience wrong, you cannot call the opinion wrong. Their purpose is not to judge but to understand (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 116).

Self-Responsibility

This methodological concept, this instructional tool within the classroom world of the adult learner (of which I am also one), affirms woman student as person too. Creating owned meaning through dialogue, co-participants learn together. There is debate and discussion, not negation. There is discovery, through sharing knowledge as lived experiences with that of the text. Within the context of the classroom, rich in its ethnic and social diversity--we have self-responsibility for any knowledge acquired. "Connected knowers try to understand texts by imagining themselves into the author's mind." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 121).

Co-participants step further and place ourselves in the script. The text as friend introduces us to another view, another mind, not unlike our own. This is mutual respect, for self and other, in sharing and appreciating each others' vision. It is this subjectivity of knowledge that brings the excitement and wish to continue developing academically.

Participant Partners

Woman as instructor and woman as student, are participant partners in our knowledge exploration. Our experiences are part of that exploration. This learning environment is also one of equality and democracy. Negative labels will not exist. The myth of learning as tedium, with signposts marked "wrong opinion", "stupid question", "humiliation", "putdown" are taken down and removed. It is the student as person discarding the leftover baggage of earlier compulsory education towards humiliation, survival of the fittest and conformity to dominance.

This coparticipatory, pedagogical goal is to be audacious enough to confront the students as living interactors with the curriculum script of classroom and content. Respect each class member's personal informal knowledge-base brought into the classroom--the positive and the negative experiences.

Re-Visioning

Knowledge is not independent topics but interconnected views of knowing. These views will be redefined and personalized when listened for, observed, and heard. For traditionally, men have posited the hypotheses and then set out determinedly to prove their subjective theory, denying women a voice in determining the social-psychological setting.

Learn from history, learn from his-story and her-story. The written story for women is comparatively new. This can be found in formal research; in novels through character sketching the permissabilities of women's lives

through the ages dependent on class or culture. Or it, even more powerfully, is through the sharing of insights, dreams, reflections, lived experiences. Before revitalization or rebirth, through education, observation, challenges, interactions, woman cradles the pearl in her hand and slowly demyths, within the metaphorical world of male, the confining myths.

As Pathfinders

Far from being a negation of self, it will be an understanding, a final acceptance, a wholeness. Women rather than being the stabilizers or the blamed behind the public face, will be included as pathfinders towards a new cultural assimilation. For interacting within the classroom, listening to each other speaking, hearing each others' simple wisdom in the listening-hearing parts of ourselves, will have an overarching impact on humankind within that classroom, upon the instructor, our homes and the new generation.

Through an intuitive vision, a woman may forge ahead by seeing the whole in her mind's eye, seeing herself as one player in the scenario called life and living. So, involved in the excitement of the process, she is oblivious to her changes that may cause resentment, conflict and temporary disintegration. There is no looking back, or one will be locked like Persephone into the underworld of human existence.

"What is so threatening?" "How come? Why?" And in the listening, reflects upon the biggest question of all: "How are we being encouraged to remain the same socially constructed creatures--men and women alike?"

For the constructivist of I/self women and curriculum, Freire serves as one model, Belenky another. Each culture has its truth and curriculum is inbuilt in each classroom personality. The instructor and students share the writing of the curriculum as lived as directors, producers, players, role models and role-makers. The curriculum as basic canvas remains.

The Classroom Landscape

Vizualize the reading, project the script, futurize the impact, relate to experiences of self and other. In this way the subject knowledge is used as a tool towards self-awareness and self-actualization. The curriculum begins where the student is. The curriculum is the background sketch. Each student creates the landscape, each a unique painting for herself, but shared with others, the classroom as gallery. So each student facilitates the other, interacting formal and informal knowledge, different disciplines, different social paradigms.

Now knowledge becomes facilitative towards greater understanding essential in a world of growing technological intrusion, confusion and possible anarchy. It is delimiting the political and economic fascism.

> You must first begin to hear your own inner voice in order to understand the importance of drawing out the voices of others, whether the other is your child, spouse, client, or friend. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 175)

Classroom as Global

And in the isolation for women of the nuclear family environment, absented from the support group, it now depends on women for women divorced from the biological setting. At times divorced from the known world of childhood, differently ethnic, differently socialized. Women for women now

share intergenerationally across cultures. Listening and speaking. For it is by being valued and feeling valued, we give value. This is risk-taking, as it is self-responsibility. But we must encourage each other to speak and listen--to hear each other into voicing, into speaking. For it is then we realise our interconnectedness. And that is women strengthening themselves as women.

Hopefully, the co-participation of instructor and student in researching our personal life-worlds will shed light on how meaningful women's personal stories are for releasing women from their silent worlds. That it will encourage us to reclaim our name and forge our own individual meanings for life. That it will shed further light on a reality of curriculum. That, rather than being perceived as iconoclastic, it will be revealed as consensus caregiving towards a greater self-understanding and therefore appreciation of humankind.

Each woman shared her journey, speaking insightfully. The curriculum experience was the process of rediscovering a sense of self. Women must not be educated as commodities for market. We are women contributing to society, to our world.

> But what can I teach you? (picks up his little black dictionary on the table). My lessons were meant to help you in <u>this</u> world. I wanted you to know how to read and write and talk in <u>this</u> world of living, stupid, cruel men.
>
> (The sound of breaking glass. Stones land in the classroom. Mr. M picks up one.) No! One of you is still alive. Ghosts don't throw stones with hot, sweating young hands. (grabs the bell and rings it wildly.) Come to School! Come to School!)
>
> (Thami appears)
>
> . . . .

(picks up his dictionary. . . . the stone in one hand, the book in the other.)

You know something interesting, Thami . . . if you put these two on a scale I think you would find that they weighed just about the same. But in this hand I am holding the whole English language. This . . . (the stone) . . . is just <u>one</u> word in that language. It's true! All that wonderful poetry that you and Isabel tried to cram into your beautiful heads . . . in here! Twenty-six letters, sixty thousand words. The greatest souls the world has ever known were able to open the floodgates of their ecstasy, their despair, their joy! . . . with the words in this little book. Aren't you tempted? I was. (Excerpt from *My Children, My Africa*, pp. 82-84, Athol Fugard, playwright)

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STAGE PLAY

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Participant	Date	Interview
Helen	December 7, 1989	First
Sarah	December 8, 1989	First
Joan	December 12, 1989	First
Ann	December 13, 1989	First
Susan	December 14, 1989	First
Isabel	January 3, 1990	First
Joan	April 30, 1990	Second
Isabel	May 14, 1990	Second
Ann	May 15, 1990	Second
Susan	June 25, 1990	Second
Sarah	June 27, 1990	Second
Helen	February 2, 1991	Second

APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW SAMPLE

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW SAMPLE

H: I'd still like to learn, you know, keep learning, but you do. I don't know, this break has made me feel I don't have the self-confidence that I should have had.

T: So what is it about the program and this floor that gave you the confidence then?

H: I don't know, I think it was the business attitude that we have here--you know, that you are treated like a professional. That's what I liked about it!

T: um.

H: That I cared about. I think the dress code was great, if it would have stayed in. Like I think it does give you a boost when you get up in the morning and get yourself going.

T: um.

H: And you look . . . well of course, if you look good, then you feel good, too.

T: um.

H: And it was the was the instructors were--always so professional.

T: What do you mean, professional?

H: Well, I think , um, well, just the way, the air about them. You know, like they, there were times that we had a lot of fun. I'll tell you, but (laughing quietly). But it was treated like a, like it would be in an office I think.

T: um.

H: I felt really . . . when I took the break the first time and came back I felt a little uncomfortable, until I got to know everybody, but then Lucy was Jane was here too, so that really helped. You know, without her, I probably would have felt more uncomfortable. Um, but then after a while, a couple of weeks and you're into it like everybody else. . . . .

APPENDIX C

A MATURE STUDENT

APPENDIX C

One woman graduate's experience upon returning to resume studies. Printed with her consent, and representative of some feelings of other women graduate students shared verbally.

This was handed to me during the winter, 1991, term with the following comments:

> "Tricia, reading your proposal brought back memories of my own return to University in 1988. I thought you might like to read this (I wrote it during my 2nd term back) as it relates to what you are doing and writing)".

A MATURE STUDENT

I make my New Year's resolution: this is the year I will go back to teaching. Great! Confidently, I send my application to the correct authority complete with transcripts of my degree and diploma. This should be simple. Right? Wrong. Many letters, phone calls, cheques and frustrations later, the edict is sent down: go back to University and complete two courses and we may issue you with a teaching certificate. Thanks a lot! Go - back - to - University. Me? I'm too old! What will I do there with all those youngsters who are almost half my age? I'll look out of place. I'll feel dumb . . . Dumb! That's the problem. What if I really am dumb? It was fine twenty years ago. Studying was easy then. But now. . . . What do they say. "Wisdom comes with age". That sounds hopeful. What about, "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety". No good. I don't think Shakespeare was thinking about

Cleopatra's brains when he wrote that! . . . Then there's Alzheimer's - I do forget things all the time, even book titles I've just read. H E L P ! It really is no use, I'll never make it. I should have been contented with my part-time job and driving the kids around. Oh, well, it'll be a change from housework. I'll give it a try.

I've registered. One more step ahead. This isn't bad: they've classified me as a 'Special' student. I like that. It has connotations of being apart from the herd . . . but isn't that just what I'm apprehensive about? Consider the alternative though. It could have been a 'mature' student. Then I would have felt really old.

Summer's over. Term starts. Here I am ready for the big day. What do I wear? . . . This is ridiculous. I'm going to a lecture, not a date. Who will care what I look like. Pity I didn't get my hands on that new - fangled cream that takes away wrinkles. Then I wouldn't feel so ancient. . . . I'm here anyway. Is this the right room for 452? Everyone looks friendly and - hey - there are some other students who look over thirty. Maybe I won't feel so odd. The Prof. talks. I break into a cold sweat. He's talking about mid-terms, end of term exams, three papers. How will I cope? I can't even remember the last exam I wrote. Has brain death started? How many neurons have died already? The girl next to me asks, "Have you taught before?" "Oh, yes", I answer blithely, "eighteen years ago. I've had a long sabbatical". Stupid answer! She smiles.

"You're lucky you've had some experience". . . . Experience. Have I? What is experience? Does it come from everyday living, from being a wife and mother, from emigrating and settling in a new country? If so, then I suppose I have had some experience, but will it help me now?

Six weeks go by. This is really fun. I like being at University. Why didn't I do this before? I enjoy learning new things, papers aren't all that threatening and even exams are manageable. I've met so many interesting people and had fascinating discussions. Enough neurons seem to have survived to keep me going. I think I'll stay here for a few more years. Teaching? I'm not sure. I think maybe when I'm older!